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Inside the Network That Created a Massacre

A REPORT BY ALEX HEARD

The Road to Oklahoma City

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An American Darkness – The Editors

Gingrich's Ugly Offspring – TRB

Clinton's Crisis– Fred Barnes

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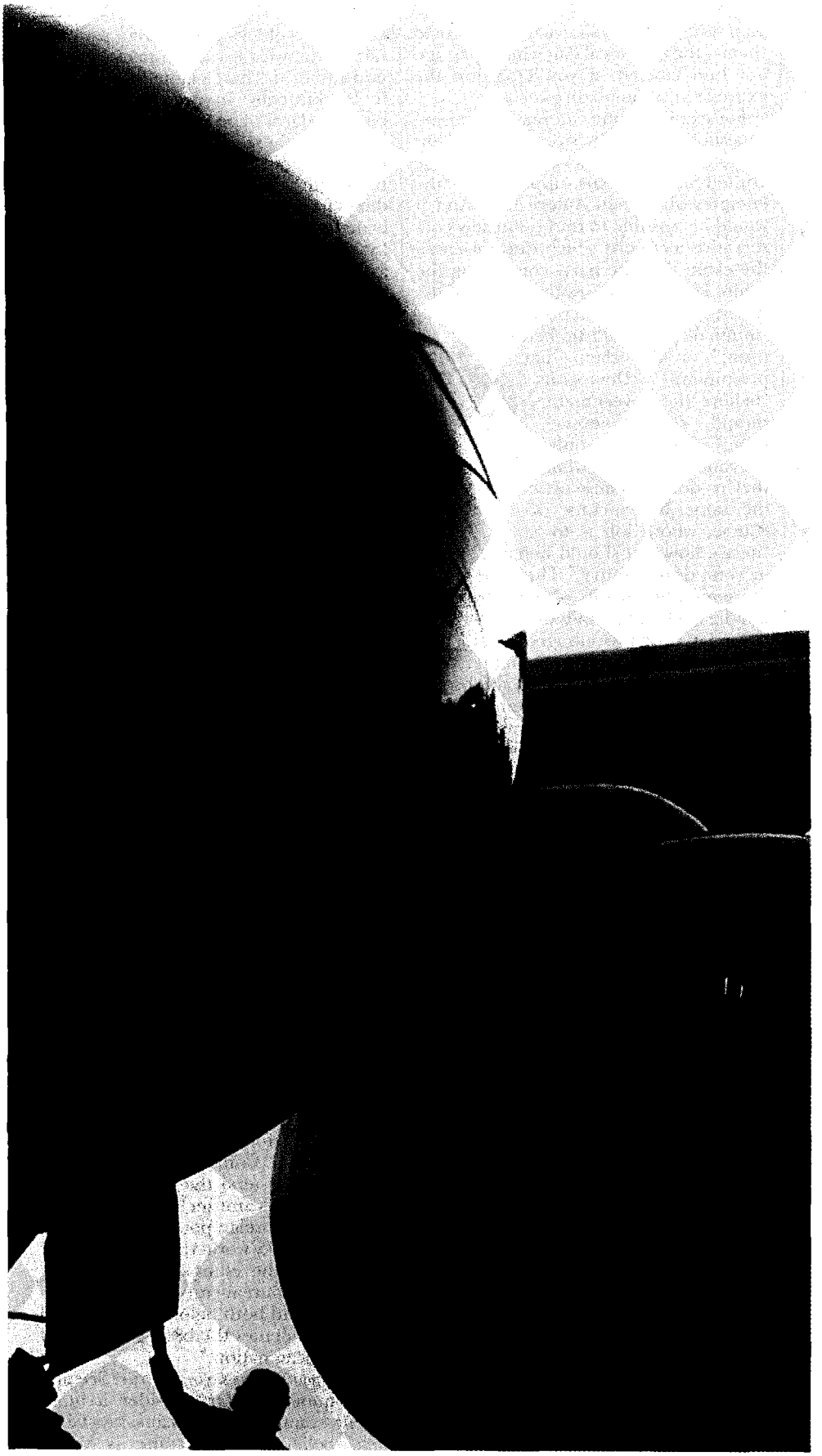

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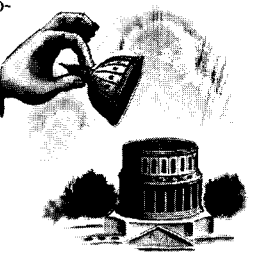
FROM WASHINGTON

Did Newt do it?

You can tell you've made Newt Gingrich feel vulnerable when he starts using the word "grotesque." After the Oklahoma City bombing, a reporter asked Gingrich if the Republicans' anti-government rhetoric had created a climate conducive to such crimes. "I think that's grotesque," he said. "I think that's grotesque and offensive." And finally, he added, "It is grotesque..." Clearly, we've hit pay dirt. What is grotesque, Gingrich said, is to suggest that anyone who "raises legitimate questions about the size and scope of the federal government has any implication in this." Well, obviously, the issue isn't the "legitimate questions." It is the distinctive élan with which Gingrich has framed them—the rhetorical flair which long ago got him labeled, if you'll pardon the expression, a "bomb thrower."

For example, one can imagine raising "questions" about the size of government without depicting the president of the United States and his supporters as "the enemies of normal Americans." And it would be possible to find politically conservative locutions which did not entail the claim that the party controlling the White House "despises the values of the American people" and promotes a "multicultural nihilistic hedonism;" or the claim that prominent Democrats "believe the government should control everything" and "believe only bureaucrats know what they're doing." These are the same bureaucrats, of course, whose job is to say "here's how you should behave in your own country." They are also the same bureaucrats who, it turns out, will die if a building falls on them.



Am I making the outrageous claim that Newt Gingrich *caused* this bombing? Well, certainly it's *possible* that nationally broadcast statements about an "enemy" executive branch bent on controlling us could have a decisive and unfortunate influence on a right-wing libertarian paramilitary drifter who already suspects that federal authorities have planted a microchip in his buttocks. Indeed, by Gingrich's own standards of proof, we could rest our case right there. As you may recall, he blamed Susan Smith's drowning of her two children on Democrats; there was "a direct nexus" between the "acceptance of brutality" and "the counterculture and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society." If that's a "direct nexus," then Gingrich is an indictable co-conspirator in the Oklahoma bombing.

Alas, that's not a direct nexus. Maybe a better petard with which to hoist Gingrich is the classic conservative "aid and comfort" formulation—as in Representative Bob Dornan's claim that young anti-war protester Bill Clinton gave "aid and comfort to the enemy." Surely people who want to blow up American buildings are at least as much an "enemy" of America as people who want to capture Saigon. And presumably they get "aid and comfort" when the speaker of the House seems to share their sense of dark menace in the federal government (or, indeed, when Dornan bolsters their view of the president's perfidy). Still, convenient though it would be to use the "aid and comfort" test here, it is burdensome on honest speech and, besides, is cheaply melodramatic. So I guess I can't use it to denounce Gingrich's cheap melodrama.

In its place, I propose a less oppressive test for responsibility (moral, not legal) in public speech. The test consists of three questions. If you answer yes to any, you should pause and reflect. If you answer yes to all three, you should be ashamed. Newt Gingrich should be ashamed.

(1) *Does the power of your words depend on their appeal to the worst in human nature?* Traditionally, racist and nationalistic rhetoric have been the chief offenders here. But Gingrich, in adapting class resentment for right-wing use, has turned the "Washington bureaucrats" and (their masters) the "elites" into the equivalent of a sinister ethnic group, if not a hostile foreign power. They inhabit a distant, murky world that is alien to our way of life; the elites are "counterculture," the bureaucrats are "socialist-minded," and both belong to a political party that "denies the basic goodness of the American nation."

(2) *Is what you're saying untrue?* See previous quotation. Or consider a more recent example. Republicans, says Gingrich, believe your income is yours, whereas Democrats believe it belongs to the government—which, at its discretion,

continued on page 45

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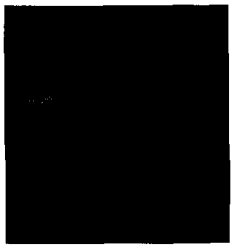

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CORRESPONDENCE

Fall of the legend

To the editors:

The inability of most elites to develop a working grasp of military culture again is illustrated by Charles Lane's put-down of Colin Powell ("The Legend of Colin Powell," April 17). Lane questions Powell's devotion to principle because he did not resign his commission upon a couple of occasions when principle clashed with duty. In 1963, I wrote a letter of resignation to Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, decrying his imposition of a whiz-kid/Ford Motor Company/business school culture on the military. McNamara's response was a courteous wish that I should do well in my next career! So I was right and he was wrong, so I get to write a letter to TNR thirty-two years later and he got to go onward and upward, screwing up on a worldwide scale. So much for the efficacy of resigning.

BARTON S. PULLING
Pocatello, Idaho

To the editors:

"The Legend of Colin Powell" paints a false portrait of a man who has spent virtually his entire adult life in the service of his country. Lane states that, in the wake of the Vietnam War, "Neither Powell nor anyone else in a position of responsibility resigned or cried out in protest." No, but instead of "retreating into the bosom of the institution," as Lane asserts, Colin Powell and other Army officers like him set about rebuilding the U.S. Army over the next two decades into a force that is, quite simply, unmatched around the world. Anyone who knows Colin Powell well knows how personally and deeply he and his generation of Army leaders felt the burden of the Vietnam experience and how they took it upon themselves to shape the superb Army of today. To suggest that during his tenure as chairman of the joint chiefs of staff Powell "hesitated to reconfigure the armed forces for the new world" is ridiculous. Powell was the catalyst of the process to shape America's armed forces for the many new challenges of the post-cold war world.

Lane's claim that "Powell gave a speech at the Naval Academy urging midshipmen to resign if they opposed a lifting of the ban" distorts a response to a question asked at the end of Powell's speech on a different subject. Whatever Powell's personal views on gays in the military, as a loyal military officer, he worked closely with Defense Secretary Les Aspin and his advisers to implement the president's policy on gays in the military. Powell's involvement was critical in helping to bring along the other joint chiefs, several of whom were on record as being strongly opposed to the proposed new policy.

Like so many others who have worked for or with Colin Powell, I know him as a man of tremendous dedication, impeccable integrity and great compassion. He has left a legacy of a proud, diverse U.S. military capable of a wide range of missions.

THOMAS K. LONGSTRETH
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Requirements
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Regarding Charles Lane's article about Colin Powell, "it is said that the character of a nation can be determined by who that nation's heroes are." Are we so starved for leadership that we cannot do any better then Colin Powell? My father taught me to speak up and act in the face of injustice and to challenge authority when that authority abused its power.

Colin Powell, a father figure? No thanks.

ALAN H. ROSENBERG
Camarillo, California

To the editors:

Charles Lane mentions that after Vietnam, leaders in the Army "rediscovered Clausewitz" and his opinion that war is an extension of politics. He notes that from Clausewitz, they developed concepts about the right of the military to have some role in making policy or in passing judgment upon policy. Clausewitz taught absolute subordination of the military to civilian leadership, regardless of whether that policy may be unwise or erroneous.

Military involvement in policy formulation and exercise of a veto over military operations are incompatible with our nation's legal traditions of civilian control over the military. On the president's role as head of the armed forces, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Fleming* v. *Page* declared: "As Commander in Chief, he is authorized to direct the movements of the naval and military forces placed by law at his command, and to employ them in the manner he may deem most effectual to harass and conquer and subdue the enemy." On the finality of the president's authority, in *Martin* v. *Mott* the Court declared: "The law does not provide for any appeal from the judgment of the president, or for any right in

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subordinate officers to review his decision, and in effect, defeat it."

JOSEPH FORBES
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Swamp man

To the editors:

You guys are like *Friday the 13th* movies on the health care reform thing: just when the audience thinks Mickey Kaus has been sent to the swamp bottom with chains attached, up he bounds through the murky surface to terrorize us again, this time with a hatchet job on Elizabeth McCaughey ("No Exegesis," May 8).

Did Clinton offer "no exit"? Most certainly, as anyone familiar with the Medicare system can attest. Despite the pitiful page 16 "escape clause," the bill's obvious intent was to delegitimize the private practice of medicine. The original Medicare legislation was full of similar escape clauses; today, it is the Medicare bureaucracy's contention that it is *illegal* to contract privately with Medicare beneficiaries. I don't share Kaus's certitude about the protective powers of one sentence in a bill extending to all Americans the glories of Medicare, especially prior to its expected reworking by the benevolent hands of Representatives Pete Stark and Henry Waxman.

Would the plan doom fee-for-service medicine? See above. Fee-for-service is not a transaction between an insurer and a provider. It occurs between a provider and patient. "Plans" offering so-called fee-for-service under the Clinton proposal are variations on the theme of capitation, centrally run, and tending to where Kaus's public education analogy has taken us: mediocrity, bureaucracy and petty politics. Real fee-for-service on a market model would wither and die under this monstrosity (a free jalopy is a better deal to most than a discounted Cadillac).

Did the plan ominously threaten privacy? Here Kaus doesn't bother to refute the charge. Everybody's doing it, right? When they do it in the private sector, we have more recourse. A major scandal erupted in Massachusetts when it was discovered by *The Boston Globe* that the largest local HMO was casually tossing office records from psychiatric therapy sessions into a computer database available to bored receptionists. They stopped rather quickly. In my own office practice, no patient data goes anywhere but into a locked file cabinet. Less efficient? Sure, but somehow patients keep coming back and paying my usurious fees.

So who's distorting the debate? Back to the swamp, Mickey.

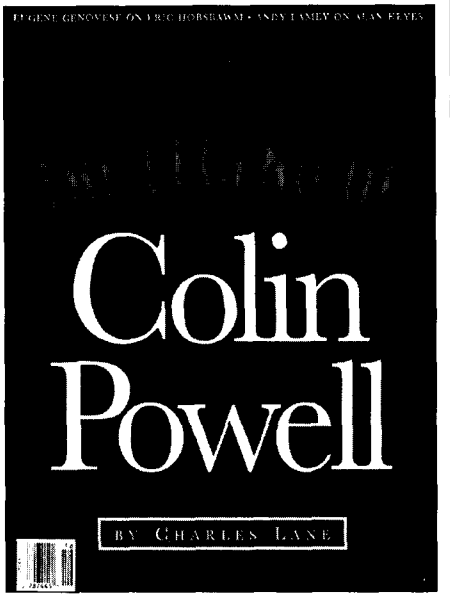
ALEX VUCKOVIC, M.D.
Belmont, Massachusetts

Leftist cadres

To the editors:

In his empathetic review of Eric Hobsbawm's *The Age of Extremes* ("The Squandered Century," April 17), Eugene D. Genovese exposes the insubstantiality of both of their Marxian positions. Both men grant the effectively exploitative character of "leftist cadres" and the creative nature of capitalist-entrepreneurs. In doing so, Genovese denies the fundamental thesis of Marx, that the capitalist system is pure exploitation because its masters contribute nothing while the proletarians do all the work.

The Genovese-Hobsbawm situation reminds me of a cartoon character who desperately climbs nonexistent rungs above



the topmost rung of a ladder and realizes that only false consciousness keeps him up—and plunges earthward to general hilarity. After the fall, Genovese might recognize another fact about Marx's system, which still evokes his desperate nostalgia. Proposing to satisfy all the needs of humanity, it lumps individuals into a collective mass and silently sacrifices just one need: liberty.

DAVID FELIX
New York, New York

Jury duty

To the editors:

How noble Robert Wright is ("Tyson vs. Simpson," April 17). He now realizes that black suspicions of "white" courts are founded on the prejudiced reality of our judicial system, even though most other benighted whites still have not learned this. Having suddenly realized this, he stands above the common herd of ignorant or racist whites. As one example, he maintains it is arguable that racist prejudice led to the conviction of Mike Tyson and the failure to convict William Kennedy Smith. I cannot judge either case, since I know little about them. However, as early as 1983, a National Research Council study concluded the evidence did not support the charge that blacks were treated unfairly in sentencing.

Further, the proportion of the prison population that is black is roughly equal to the proportion of crimes committed by blacks, according to the Justice Department's national criminal victimization studies. The studies involve private interviews of random samples of the population, rather than official crime reports. They are highly respected for the care and sophistication with which they are conducted. They cannot be easily accused of producing racially biased results. Whatever the conventional wisdom, the evidence for the judicial system's racism is not all that persuasive.

I fear that the suspicion of whites by blacks has other roots. One of them, though probably not a major one, is the constant reiteration by "morally superior" white intellectuals that most whites (though not themselves, of course) continue to behave in a racist manner.

STANLEY ROTHMAN
Northampton, Massachusetts

Real Americans

To the editors:

The reason Clarence Thomas has been "tagged with the Straussian label" ("Odd Man In," by Andy Lamey, April 17) must be his pre-judicial statements about natural rights and natural law. As chairman of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, he noted the Founding Fathers' grounding of constitutionalism in abiding notions of human dignity.

Having worked closely with Thomas when he was speaking and writing on these themes, I doubt that he could be so characterized. Indeed, shortly after he was nominated for the Supreme Court, one of the nation's pre-eminent political theorists asked me whether he was a "Straussian." I responded, no, he was a real American. Yet for both Thomas and Strauss (with whom and whose students I studied) being a real American meant an appreciation of the ideas of liberty, equality and consent of the governed as related in our Declaration of Independence; in a word, the wisdom of American political life in both its thought and its practice. If that is enough to make one a Straussian, to paraphrase the Declaration's principal author Thomas Jefferson, we are all Americans, we are all Straussians.

KEN MASUGI
Ashland, Ohio

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Where We Stand

By Albert Shanker, President
American Federation of Teachers

Linking School and Work

A recent *New York Times* story found that employers don't believe schools are preparing young people for their workplaces. But this may be the result of a phenomenon known as the "self-fulfilling prophecy." Self-fulfilling prophecy is a sociological term used to describe events that occur because people believe they will. The classic example is large numbers of people making a run on a bank because they believe it is failing. Their run makes the bank fail.

The *Times* story ("Employers Wary of School System: Survey Finds Broad Distrust of Younger Job Applicants," February 20, 1995) was based on a national survey done by the Census Bureau for the U. S. Department of Education. The Census Bureau surveyed 3,000 employers across the nation last August and September. Employers were asked, "When you consider hiring a new nonsupervisory or production worker, how important are the following in your decision to hire?" The Census Bureau used a scale of 1 through 5. A score of 1 indicates that the quality is not important or not even considered while a score of 5 indicates that the quality is considered to be extremely important. (See table below.)

Clearly, most employers give little weight to the last three items, which deal with the performance of students in school. In fact, they are more interested in how many years students spent in school than in what they did while they were there. (See the fifth item from the bottom.) This probably means that employers seldom bother to ask for teacher recommendations or transcripts of grades, and they probably don't pay any attention to where a student went to school. Is there any doubt that the word gets back to students who are still in school that these things don't count? And if they don't count, why should students work hard to get good grades or attend schools with reputations for high standards rather than easy ones?

Prospective employers are more interested in how many years students spent in school than in what the kids did while they were here.

It's obvious that the less attention employers pay to school performance, the less incentive kids have to achieve and the more poorly prepared they will be. One way out of this problem would be for employers to ask for information about student achievement and take it seriously. But it's not that simple.

In Japan and Germany, where there are close links between what students do in school and the jobs they get when they graduate, employers know what a grade means. Like most other industrialized democracies, these countries have school systems with external standards and examinations. If students take certain courses and pass certain exams, there is no question about the material they have studied and their level of achievement. This is true for students going on to university, but it is also true for young people who are entering the job market right from school.

In the U.S., every school district is free to set its own curriculum and standards, and employers have no way of figuring out what an A in algebra means—or even whether "algebra" is just consumer math that has been given a fancy name.

Until businesses can have confidence in student transcripts and recommendations, they will go on disregarding them—and students will continue to conclude that what they do in school does not count. States that are now working on Goals 2000 should keep this in mind. The external standards they create for their students can help re-establish the essential link between school achievement and the job market.

Qualities That Count With Employers

Quality	*Score*
Attitude	4.6
Communication skills	4.2
Previous work experience	4.0
Recommendations from current employees	3.4
Recommendations from previous employers	3.4
Industry-based credentials certifying skills	3.2
Years of schooling completed	2.9
Score on tests administered as part of interview	2.5
Academic performance (grades)	2.5
Experience or reputation of applicant's school	2.4
Teacher recommendations	2.1

Mr. Shanker's comments appear in this ad under the auspices of the American Federation of Teachers. Reader correspondence is invited. Address your letters to Mr. Shanker at the AFT, 555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. © 1995 by Albert Shanker.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MAY 15, 1995

AN AMERICAN DARKNESS

While the smoke was still rising and the bleeding bodies were still being pulled from the pit, the catastrophe in Oklahoma City seemed beyond politics. It seemed to speak more generally and more crushingly of the evil in our nature, of the transformation of ordinary life by tragedy. But it quickly became clear that the horror was not beyond politics, and for this reason it is important to reflect on the proper and improper ways of thinking politically about tragedy. Wild thoughts and wild words are what got us into this mess. They lead sometimes to wild deeds.

It was a matter of hours before the wild thoughts and the wild words began. While the suspicion of Middle Eastern terrorism had a basis in reality—the feds would have been delinquent in their duty if they were not reminded of the signature history of truck-bombing—the taunting of Arab Americans, on the streets and on the airwaves, was terrible. There was much less of this, however, than their spokesmen would have us believe and there would have been even less had Arab American leaders convincingly shown their revulsion at previous acts of terror. The feds, of course, were not delinquent in their duty, and within hours the domestic origins of this slaughter were exposed; and then another ethical and rhetorical inhibition disappeared. When it was revealed that Timothy McVeigh was a member of a "militia" in Michigan that was arming itself against the federal government, this became the bombing that Newt Gingrich wrought, the anti-government chickens coming home to roost.

Careful. Whatever you think of the Contract with America, it does not call for the blowing up of day care centers. Political discourse is impossible in a world of slippery slopes and trickle-down values, in which every moderate idea is a radical idea that dare not speak its name, and no distinction is made between the variety of ways in which a political principle may be translated into political action. The liberals who wish to lay Timothy McVeigh at Newt Gingrich's door remind us of the House speaker himself, who uttered the most disgraceful remark in recent memory when he suggested that a mother in South Carolina murdered her sons as a consequence of Bill Clinton's lack of enthusiasm for "family values." Timothy McVeigh is not the child of Newt Gingrich (for a somewhat differing view, see TRB, page 4). The sewer that produced McVeigh and his view of the world is an old institution of American life.

Enough of the politics of dead babies. But ideas do have consequences. The bombing of the federal building was an act of terror, that is, a political act, and the language of right-wing anarchy that was heard from Michigan and elsewhere—the idolatry of guns, the rage at authority, the paranoid picture of American culture, the extreme patriotism expressed as extreme intolerance—was eerily familiar. A few months ago Rush Limbaugh, who protests that he is only an entertainer, instructed his listeners that "the second violent American revolution is just about—I got my fingers about a quarter of an inch apart—is just about that far away. Because these people are sick and tired of a bunch of bureaucrats in Washington driving into town and telling them what they can and can't do with their land." If, after Oklahoma City, Limbaugh and the other incitement artists do not look into their hearts and reflect on the wisdom of their wildness, then they have no hearts. And conservatives everywhere might think again about the fire with which they are playing, which is the delegitimation of authority. What is conservatism, really, without authority? Only an appetite for power.

If any doubt remains about the legitimacy of the federal government, the performance last week of the federal government, of its rescuers and its sleuths, should put it to rest. After he saw the destruction with his own eyes, Bill Clinton finally had the sound of a man with a gut, and his proposal to create a unit of the FBI to combat domestic terrorism is a good proposal; and in the days to come he could do worse than stake his career on gun control. Already voices are raised against Clinton's proposal in the name of civil liberties. But whose civil liberties, exactly, were violated in the swift investigation that led to McVeigh and the raving losers with whom he is associated? And the people who were buried in the rubble in Oklahoma City lost their civil liberties, too.

Last week we heard a great deal about the end of American innocence. This is tiresome. There is no edification to be gained from what happened in Oklahoma City, only a sobering up. We are, and we have always been, also an ugly people, fascinated by force, uneasy about difference, enchanted by absolutes. A great country, with a darkness to match. •

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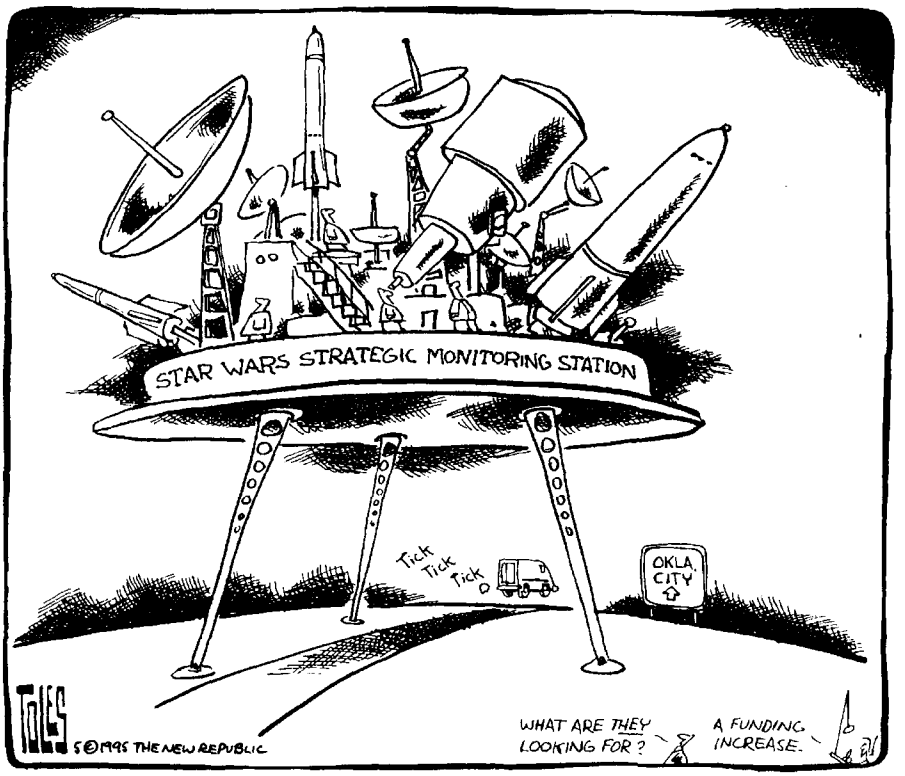
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: Rush Limbaugh said: "The same thing applies here in an argument over gun control. The way to get these guys is to go after the guys who did it. Not have a bunch of bomb-control laws."... West Milford, New Jersey, police confiscated nine computer disks containing recipes for napalm from local parents after two 12-year-olds were arrested for making the explosive.... In Pahrump, Nevada, Dana Schaefers shot and killed motorist Alan Miller for following him too closely with his high beams on.... One hundred and fifty police officers attended a conference in Dundalk, Maryland, to learn how to be "more sensitive to witchcraft."... Three convicts sued the Mini-Cassia Jail in Idaho complaining that the withholding of their late-night snacks constituted cruel and unusual punishment.... Kingman, Arizona, trailer-park owner Bob Ragin said Timothy McVeigh was a quiet, model tenant.



FRIENDS OF THE MILITIAS I: Two months ago, freshman Representative Helen Chenoweth of Idaho held a town meeting in Boise to hear grievances against excessive government force. More than fifteen members of the United States Militia Association attended, according to *The Idaho Spokesman-Review*. Also present was white supremacist Randy Weaver's attorney, whom Chenoweth made a special point of introducing. In the *Spokesman-Review* article, she held up Weaver's 1992 shoot-out with federal marshals as a "prime example of why some people live in fear of their own government." Much of the meeting was spent gathering proof to back an accusation Chenoweth made in February that armed federal agents were landing "black helicopters" on ranchers' property to enforce the Endangered Species Act. Her reference to "helicopters" was a bad enough distortion, since the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Agency, which enforces the act, doesn't own any. But "black helicopters" is the favorite militia code for the evil feds, as in "U.S. Marines descending from the sky in the middle of the night in mysterious black helicopters upon the sleeping residents of a village in Georgia," from the white supremacist newspaper *Spotlight*. After the town meeting, Chenoweth said she'd introduce legislation prohibiting federal agents from carrying firearms unless they receive written permission from the local sheriff. Not even Oklahoma City prompted her to tone down the rhetoric. When asked about the bombing, she told *The Coeur d'Alene Press* on April 24 that we "must begin to look at the public policies that may be pushing people too far."

FRIENDS OF THE MILITIAS II: Representative Jack Metcalfe of Washington state has for years also been a featured speaker at militia conferences. His topic is always the same—abolish the Federal Reserve Board, an obsession which fits neatly with the Pat Robertson, Jewish-cabal-controls-the-world's-banks theory. Metcalfe is now co-chairman of Redeem Our Country, a national far-right organization whose board includes editors of *Spotlight* and G. Jack Mohr, author of a series of Nazi tapes circulated among white supremacists. We point this out not to indict Metcalfe for what has happened. But from now on, he should know who his friends are.

MOOD SWING:

Workers in Washington Express Fear, Concern

—*The Washington Post*, April 20.

Federal workers in D.C. don't fear on-the-job attack

—*The Washington Times*, April 20.

(Thanks to Jim Wolffe of Falls Church, Virginia.)

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DEATH AND RENO: "If there is death, if death occurs, the death penalty is available, and we will seek it," Janet Reno said last week when asked whether she would seek federal executions for the Oklahoma bombers. Excuse us, but hasn't the attorney general repeatedly claimed to be opposed to capital punishment? This is Clintonism at its weirdest. A Supreme Court justice can personally oppose the death penalty but insist on its constitutionality. A governor can oppose the death penalty but refuse to commute capital sentences out of deference to the will of the people. But an attorney general, as the nation's chief prosecutor, cannot personally oppose the death penalty and yet make a Torquemada-like executive decision to seek it in virtually every instance where it is available. During her first two years in office, Reno demanded the federal death penalty in five cases involving nine defendants, making her record hard to distinguish from the Bush administration's average of seven federal death penalty defendants a year. All this leads us to wonder whether the attorney general believes anything at all.

Replacing the dollar bill with a coin that won't be mistaken for a quarter.
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
ONE DOLLAR
1 YEN
TOLES ©1995 THE NEW REPUBLIC
A POLICY THAT WON'T BE MISTAKEN FOR A PLAN.

THE COMPANY YOU KEEP: Newt Gingrich's connection between Susan Smith, the woman who drowned her two young sons, and Democratic-inspired American decadence is now folklore. But here's a connection Gingrich hasn't made yet. *The Post and Courier* of Charleston, South Carolina, reported April 12 that one of the possible contributing factors to Smith's behavior was early sexual abuse. Her stepfather allegedly abused her repeatedly when she was a teenager. "She detailed one incident at about 5 a.m. one March morning when she woke up to find Russell [her stepfather] standing over her. Russell, a Christian Coalition member, had been out putting up campaign posters for presidential candidate Pat Robertson, the televangelist who founded the Christian Coalition, Smith said. He kissed her and then took her hand, thinking [she] was asleep and put her hand on his genitals and kissed her again." So what's the link between child abuse and Pat Robertson? None, of course. But we're waiting for Gingrich to comment.

PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION:

Italian Conservatives Gain in Regional Voting

—*The Washington Post*, April 25.

Italian Voters Give Boost to Leftist Parties in Regional Elections

—*The New York Times*, April 25.
(Thanks to Tim Rustow of New York, New York.)

EXPERT QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "Kids who see it on TV are not going to be as affected as kids who were actually in the building."—Dr. Alan Ravitz, associate professor of psychiatry and pediatrics at the University of Chicago, on "All Things Considered," April 21.

LAW AND ORDER:

Death Penalty Bills Seen Paving Way to Executions

—*The New York Times*, April 10.

Chancellor Wants Students To Take Required Courses

—*The Banner Herald* of Athens, Georgia, March 13.
(Thanks to Victory Van Dyck of Princeton, New Jersey, and L. Reichle of Athens, Georgia.)

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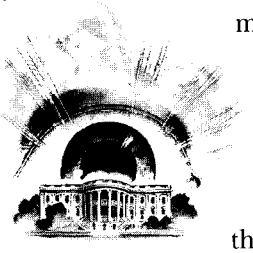
TACTICS, TACTICS

By Fred Barnes

Two days after the Oklahoma City explosion, President Clinton was asked if criticism of the federal government had "contributed" to the bombing. "I think it's important that we not speculate about the motives, the atmosphere or anything else until this investigation is complete," he said. That was the signal for Leon Panetta, the White House chief of staff, to say on "Meet the Press" on April 23 that debate about the size of government was "in no way related to the horrible events that happened in Oklahoma City." But that night on "60 Minutes" Clinton changed his tack, denouncing "the kind of incendiary talk we have." The next day, discussing the bombing in a Minneapolis speech, he attacked "loud and angry voices in America today," especially on the radio.



This was a tactical presidency at work. Rather than drive a legislative or ideological agenda in Washington—the strategic approach—Clinton has limited himself to seizing targets of opportunity, especially initiatives of congressional Republicans. He did this voluntarily. He could have crafted a budget calling for more deficit reduction, dispatched a new health care bill to Capitol Hill, insisted his welfare reform measure be introduced again this year. But he chose not to. His most important speech of 1995, the address in Dallas, was a critique of what House Speaker Newt Gingrich had wrought. Now, no one in the White House can be sure what reaction Clinton will have to an issue. He's erratic, passing up the chance to link his critics to the bombing one moment, seizing it the next. In the hours after the Oklahoma City bombing, Clinton aides debated whether he should get involved at all, since he might attract blame. To his credit, Clinton didn't flinch. His instinct was to be a voice of reassurance.

The chief characteristic of a tactical presidency is shifting themes. In his State of the Union address in January and in his East Room press conference on April 18, Clinton was conciliatory. He urged bipartisanship. But in other speeches, he has been strongly partisan. Democrats are puzzled. So are Republicans. They've decided to ignore Clinton until he figures out which way he wants to go. As best I could tell, few GOP House members even bothered to watch Clinton's press conference or his interview on CNN on April 13. Clinton's tactical style has diminished the impact of presidential pronouncements. They're taken as mere talking points.

Clinton puts an activist spin on his new approach to the presidency. "If you think about our most successful periods of reform, these initiatives have been shaped by presidents who incorporated what was good, smoothed out what was rough and discarded what would hurt," he said in Dallas. "That was the role of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson in the aftermath of the populist era. That was the role of Franklin Roosevelt in the aftermath of the La Follette progressive movement. And that is my job in the next 100 days and for all the days I serve as president." Not quite. The difference is the Roosevelts and Wilson drove their own agendas, while Clinton simply responds to someone else's.

After the bombing, Clinton sounded like another president, Richard Nixon. Campaigning in October 1970, Nixon quoted a newspaper editorial that blamed a fatal bombing at the University of Wisconsin on "anyone who talked recklessly of revolution, anyone who has chided with mild disparagement the violence of extremism, while hinting that the cause was right all the time." Clinton, in Minneapolis, said: "It is time we all stood up and spoke against that kind of reckless speech and behavior." Nixon said: "It is time to answer those who have given this distorted and inaccurate picture of America. It is time for the great silent majority of Americans to stand up and be counted."

Clinton's problem, however, is not that his message is Nixonian, but that there's no sustained message at all. And that's unfortunate for Clinton, particularly because he has an appealing message that never gets a full airing. It's held hostage by the tactical presidency. The message is about the fraying of the social fabric and the decline of morality and the family. William Kristol, a former Bill Bennett aide, calls it "a soft version of the Bennett message." George Stephanopoulos, Clinton's political adviser, says what Clinton and Bennett say about the decline of American values is "similar." For example, the president concluded a speech to California Democrats on April 8 by listing the traits some schoolchildren had written by their handprints: "Cooperation. Respect. Patience. Caring. Sense of humor. Common sense. Friendship. Responsibility. Flexibility. Effort. Creativity. Initiative. Communication. Problem-solving. Integrity. Perseverance." They could have been chapter headings from Bennett's *Book of Virtues*. Clinton and Bennett chatted at the Gridiron Club dinner in Washington in March. Clinton asked Bennett what he'd been reading. Bennett gave him a list.

The Bennett-Clinton talk about restoring traditional values isn't favored in Washington, New York and Los Angeles. Especially in L.A., after Clinton zinged Hollywood, Bennett-like, for "movie after movie after movie" that "romanticizes violence and killing." My guess is most of the country would be receptive. A social-cultural message would certainly do a lot more for Clinton's standing than his current approach of taking potshots at Republican proposals. It would give him a distinctive, consistent voice. Heaven knows he needs one. •

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BURMA POSTCARD

LAST RESORT

By Jeff Wise

It's summertime, and the living is easy on Ngapali Beach, where Burma's elite meet to retreat. Indian Ocean waves lap placidly at an uninterrupted mile-long stretch of sand, the cool breeze bears the scents of brine, bougainvillea and, ever so faintly, the sounds of a televised military marching band.

There's no mistaking Ngapali for Palm Beach, or even Daytona. Though the government-run Ngapali Beach Hotel is said to be the finest seaside resort in the nation, it is a bit worn at the edges, like an old motel bypassed by the highway. There is plenty of dust, no phone and only six hours of electricity a day. Nonetheless, the place is filled to capacity with an assortment of top army brass, members of the crypto-communist military junta that rules the country and the occasional Western backpacker.

Officer U Mg Mg San bobs in the shallow water atop a black rubber inner tube. A twenty-five-year veteran of the army, he's taking a four-day vacation with his family from his posting in rebellious Shan State. Personally, he says, he hasn't seen much of the fighting. And the gold chains and earrings he and his family wear suggest that he embodies the new, rather more mercantile spirit of the Burmese Army. "April, I visit Bangkok," he says. "For excursion. With business." What sort of business? He searches for the words. "Machine factory," he says.

Mixing business with pleasure in Bangkok is not a new idea, but it marks a shift in focus for the Burmese military and the country it rules. For years the Burmese government preached an austere form of xenophobic socialism, blocking not only foreign investment but foreign visitors as well and generally taking nonaligned Third Worldism to paranoid extremes. But now, like China, Vietnam and the other shrinking remnants of communism, Burma—or what the government calls Myanmar—has taken a new tack. After decades of economic failure, it has decided that its business, too, is business. And one of the most hermetic nations on earth has been bitten by the tourist bug.

Attempting to lure foreign visitors to Ngapali is just a small part of the tourism campaign. Tourist visas for the country, long issued for only twenty-four hours at a time, are now granted for four-week stints, and the government has gone as far as to declare 1996 "Visit Myanmar Year." Democratic reforms are still nonexistent, but to a certain extent, this economic drive is working. Joint-venture hotels backed by money from Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore are springing up in the capital; a new airline funded by Singaporean investors has begun flying around Burma; tourism, most of it from Southeast Asia but some, too, from Europe and America, is growing by 50 percent a year.

Yet forty years of ruinous civil war and even more ruinous socialist incompetence do not a tourist paradise make. The sand of Ngapali Beach is fine and soft, leading to a deep-blue Indian Ocean, but on a morning stroll one is apt to startle a pariah dog or two squatting to defecate. At the hotel's sole restaurant the service standards are pure Soviet-bloc. Waiters lounge around in their black trousers and bow ties, chatting among themselves, blithely unaware of their customers.

When the electricity finally comes on in the evening, bored holiday-makers head back to the hotel to watch TV. Burma's one station is basically the junta's own public-access show. The segments show soldiers marching, soldiers climbing cliffs, soldiers singing—and, oddly, soldiers playing bagpipes. For a change of pace, there is a spot about the country's newest irrigation trenches.

Burma's newspapers, such as the English-language *New Light of Myanmar*, are more informative, if you read between the lines. Recently, for instance, two events of unusual importance occurred. On the Thai border government troops succeeded in routing Karen resistance fighters (one of Burma's many ethnic insurgencies) from their stronghold in Manerplaw. In the heart of the country, at Mandalay, a massive forced-labor project to dredge the royal moat was finally completed. Both were proud moments in the government's policy of oppression and enslavement, but neither captured the headlines like the opening of a new beach resort at Kann Tharyar, sixty-six miles south of Ngapali. "Today is auspicious not only for inauguration of the Kann Tharyar Beach Resort . . . but also for extension of a new sector for tourism industry's development," Tourism Minister Lieutenant General Kyaw Ba announced in his opening speech, concluding, with ominous cheerfulness: "The ministry believes that vacationers will surely have a good time during their visit to the beach."

The ministry also believes that hard-currency-toting tourists will spur local economies. It's a nice idea, but one Ngapali itself appears to contradict. The poverty here is as grinding as everywhere else in Burma. Inland, rice-paddy land lies parched and barren within the shadow of the resort's large reservoir. Down in the surf, two dozen fishermen laboriously pull the crescent of their net to shore. When, after forty minutes, they manage to scoop out its contents, they will find just four basketfuls of tiny shrimp and a handful of minnows. A clutch of colonels and their wives look on, pointing and smiling at the spectacle. As they drift away, the electricity comes back on, softly blending another marching tune into the evening breeze.

JEFF WISE is a writer living in Hong Kong.

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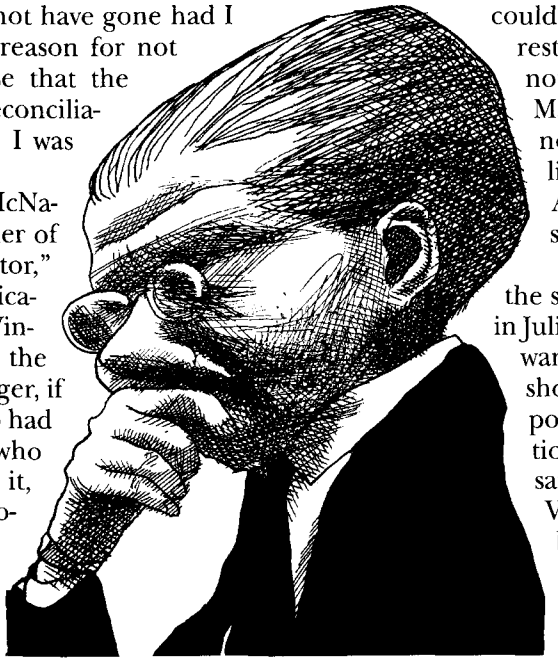
McNamara's phony redemption.

THE VINDICATOR

By Eugene McCarthy

"If you don't get it, you don't get it." That's *The Washington Post*'s advertising slogan. So I was somewhat surprised to be invited to a reception given by Katharine Graham, the publisher of the *Post*, for Robert McNamara on the publication of his new book, *In Retrospect*. I didn't get it. I had not in twenty years been invited to the residence of the publisher. I had never been on social or friendly or good political terms with the author. I was out of town on the day of the reception, but would not have gone had I been here. I had no very clear reason for not going, other than a vague sense that the event was to be a kind of rite of reconciliation, a return of a prodigal son. I was not prepared to participate.

If one were to apply to Robert McNamara one sobriquet, in the manner of Lincoln's "The Great Emancipator," or Reagan's "The Great Communicator," it would best be "The Great Vindicator." The early response to the publication of *In Retrospect* was anger, if not rage, on the part of those who had been against the war, those who fought and those who were for it, and those who managed it and promoted it. The current attitude by most of those involved in the war is that what they have learned from McNamara's book has vindicated them for support or opposition to the war.



ROBERT McNAMARA BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

President Clinton says his opposition and avoidance of service in the war was justified by McNamara's confession; that he has been vindicated. Admirals and generals are claiming a kind of vindication for not having prosecuted the war successfully, evidently because McNamara had not believed in it strongly enough.

Officers, some retired, some still in service, feel vindicated, for having accepted and made fraudulent reports of body counts and of military progress, reports supporting McNamara's false and misleading public statements.

Leading newspapers that supported the war, and supported McNamara when he was nominated to be secretary of Defense and during his service in that office—especially *The New York Times*—are attacking him, but still accepting him as their vindicator. They did not need full vindication from McNamara, though, as they had granted themselves partial vindication with the publication of the Pentagon Papers in 1971. Neither the recent *Times* editorials nor an earlier magazine-length article carried any reference to a *Times* front-page story, published in mid-March of 1968, that reported how U.S. Marines had surrounded 128 Vietcong soldiers and held time in a pincer movement while they were killed by helicopter fire. This was the report of what turned out to be the My Lai Massacre.

McNamara should not be allowed to claim too much guilt or power. Or to claim that his resignation or public statements, at one or the other critical points in the escalation of the war, would have made much difference. It might have saved him from the anguish he seems to be suffering now. "One could have wished," wrote Daniel Berrigan in 1971, "when Robert McNamara ... stepped off the scene, for some public utterance." High-ranking military and naval officers, now retired, say they were convinced that the war could not be won, under the political restraints being imposed upon it. But not one of them resigned in protest. MacArthur, in the Korean War, did not resign, but he challenged political policy, and got himself fired. A better way to act than to serve silently and wait for vindication.

The academics, the intellectuals, the social thinkers, the sort referred to in Julien Benda's *Treason of the Clerks*, may want to claim vindication. They, too, should be held to stronger judgments, possibly "pardons," as in the distinction President Carter made when he said he would not grant amnesty to Vietnam protesters and defectors, but he would pardon them.

The accretion of McNamara's self-confidence began before he became secretary of Defense. It was amplified as he took over that office, a former "Whiz Kid," a Harvard Business School graduate. He came from Ford Motors, at a time when it was gospel that American automobile companies could make no mistakes, at least no small ones. A power also attributed to the prospective secretary of Defense, along with a steel-trap mind. He came into a Pentagon, which at that time believed it, too, was above failure. McNamara incarnated the myth described by L. P. Jacks in a lecture given in 1926. Jacks remarked, "I am informed by philologists that the rise to power of these two words [problem and solution] as the determining terms of public debate, is an affair of the last two centuries. On the whole, the influence of these words is malignant and becoming increasingly so. They have deluded poor men with Messianic expectations."

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I began to have doubts about McNamara's power of judgment, and accuracy of reports, in the Kennedy years, with his part in the Bay of Pigs, and then his "have the boys home by Christmas" and his "two wars like Vietnam." And I was moved to question his reliability when on November 30, 1965, on his return from Vietnam, he said, "The most vital impression that I bring back is that we have stopped losing the war."

I would not be numbered among those vindicated or said to be vindicated by McNamara. In retrospect, I would rather credit "vindication" to the voters of New Hampshire in March of 1968. Or to the soldier, in uniform, who appeared at an early rally in New Hampshire and gave me a small package, which I thought contained a book. When I opened the package later in the evening, I found it to be a small case. The case contained a Medal of Honor, given to the soldier for his service in Vietnam, and a note saying that he was ashamed of what the United States was doing in Vietnam.

The veterans of the war, of course, are an exception. They have spoken not of having been vindicated, but of having been betrayed.

EUGENE MCCARTHY is a former senator from Minnesota.

Inside the world of the Waco-obsessed right.

THE ROAD TO OKLAHOMA CITY

By Alex Heard

"I don't *think* there's something fishy going on," says Al Thompson, a friendly, soft-spoken Indianan. "I *know* there's something fishy. Right now I'm asking myself which 'alphabet agency' of the federal government might have done it."

"It" is the Oklahoma City bombing, and Thompson is part of a surprisingly large cohort of right-wing conspiracy theorists who have already decided that the government—and not unhinged, rogue militia members—orchestrated the blast. This belief is part of a larger theory that Al and his wife, Linda, who together head an Indianapolis-based "patriot" organization called the American Justice Federation, have assembled after two years of poking through the ashes of Waco. Their aim has been to discover what "really happened" during the fifty-one-day siege of the Branch Davidian compound in 1993, and though their arguments sound laughably weird, it's probably not wise to laugh them off. Last week, *The New York Times* contended that Waco has become "the Patriot Movement's main anti-government rallying cry largely as a result of... Linda Thompson."

The Thompsons are completely open about their views, and they don't sound crazy, though Linda does dish out her theories with a slightly wheels-off intensity. Their research, however, has led to conclusions that most people will find deranged. For starters, they don't believe what the news media have been saying about Timothy James McVeigh and the alleged Waco connection—that is, the idea that McVeigh may have been enraged over the government's deadly assault on the Branch Davidians and may have decided to exact revenge. McVeigh hasn't been convicted of anything, of course, but the McVeigh-Waco-rage-Oklahoma City linkage is looking awfully strong in the early going. In the right-wing militia scene, Waco has become the ultimate symbol of government intrusiveness and evil. McVeigh is known to have visited Waco after the disastrous April 19, 1993 climax, and a Michigan acquaintance of McVeigh's has said he was the type of person who considered Waco "a battle cry." One unnamed FBI witness said he was "enraged" and obsessed by Waco, and a neighbor of McVeigh's in Kingman, Arizona, has told *The San Francisco Chronicle* of seeing McVeigh's violent side at the end of a session of target practice with semiautomatic weapons. "It scared the hell out of me," the man said. "He pretty much went crazy on anything: trees, rocks, anything there. He just went ballistic."

All the same, the Thompsons aren't buying it. They don't rule out McVeigh's having detonated the truck bomb, but they consider him "too stupid" to have been a major player. Al's guess is that he'll prove to be either a "patsy" or a government agent. Linda says "it's already been announced on CNN" that someone, probably the government, had installed a microchip in McVeigh's buttocks, so he might have been a Manchurian Candidate.

Linda is also convinced that a government agency, "probably the FBI but I don't know that," used the truck blast as a decoy to hide the fact that two other bombs—the ones that really did the damage—were going off inside at the same time. "We have a seismographic

ALEX HEARD is working on a book about millennial and utopian subcultures, *Apocalypse, Pretty Soon*, to be published by W.W. Norton.

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report from the University of Oklahoma that shows there were two distinct blasts," she says. Together, the Thompsons contend that the government arranged the Oklahoma City bombing to deflect attention from its original sin: the murder of David Koresh and the more than eighty men, women and children who died with him in the Mt. Carmel compound.

When the Thompsons say murder, they don't mean, as some mainstream critics from the left and right have argued, that the government's heavy-handed tactics at Waco "drove" the Branch Davidians to commit mass suicide, or that government tanks started the fire by bashing through walls into flammable substances (see "Not So Wacko," page 18). They mean that the Davidians were literally whacked—in a premeditated stroke of Orwellian evil that was part of Big Brother's broader effort to quash religious freedom and the rights of private gun owners.

TIMOTHY McVEIGH BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

This hypothesis is fully explored in two videos produced by Linda. In *Waco, The Big Lie* and *Waco, The Big Lie Continues*, she claims that the Mt. Carmel blaze was intentionally set by government tanks equipped with flamethrowers, and that the four Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms agents who died during the initial February 28, 1993, raid on the Davidians' compound were former bodyguards of President Bill Clinton. Thompson suggests that these men were offed by fellow agents because they knew too much about Clinton's past. As proof of both themes, the tapes show what she insists is a tank spewing flames as it crashes though a compound wall. (In fact, it's sunlight reflecting off a piece of fractured Sheetrock.) She also displays autopsy sketches of the dead ATF agents. Against this grisly backdrop, the viewer is informed that three of the agents received head wounds, professional execution style.

"It would appear," the narrator of *Waco, The Big Lie Continues* intones spookily, "that someone in the government wanted these men *real* dead."

It's a truism that among JFK assassination buffs there are responsible researchers, and then there are people who think JFK's brain is alive and playing computer chess on a secret floor of Parkland Hospital in Dallas. The same thing holds for the robust and apparently growing subculture of Waco conspiracy researchers, a group of mostly rightward-leaning burrowers who, in the aftermath of Oklahoma City, probably should receive more attention. Above all, they illustrate the amazing amount of Waco-oriented rage that has been clanging around on the American fringe for the past two years.

To be fair, it must be said that most of the Waco buffs consider Linda Thompson a flake, and that in some ways she's unique. Thompson is actively involved with the militia movement—a loose confederation of right-wing paramilitary groups whose members are also united in their loathing of the government and their fondness for guns. Unless they're hiding it, most of the other Waco buffs are not connected to the militias. What unites them instead, says Ron Engelman, an Albuquerque, New Mexico-based archivist who was a talk-radio host in Dallas during the Waco siege, is a belief that the government behaved recklessly, criminally and murderously at Waco, that government investigations of Waco were whitewashes, and that an independent reinvestigation is overdue.

Most Waco buffs are Texans who, like many JFK researchers, had not been involved in any kind of journalism or research prior to the event that changed their lives. The main targets of their wrath are the FBI, the ATF, Clinton, Attorney General Janet Reno, the news media and the Chicago-based Cult Awareness Network, which they accuse of demagoguing the government into believing that Koresh could never be taken alive. Though they're not as strident as Thompson, neither are they shrinking violets, and all of their work alleges government conspiracy rather than, say, government clumsiness. Among the key players:

* Jack DeVault, a retired Air Force major whose book, *The Waco Whitewash,* focuses mainly on the San Antonio trial and subsequent imprisonment of eleven surviving

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Branch Davidians, five of whom were convicted of manslaughter. DeVault believes—and makes a coherent case—that the judge was determined from the start to impose a harsh penalty. DeVault says his goal is to "put our oppressive, freedom-sucking government back into its constitutional cage."

* Richard Mosley, a Texas blueprint draftsman and producer of *Day 51*, a video that promises: "In chilling detail, you will learn how the BATF and FBI murdered nearly 100 Branch Davidians." It also explores possible connections between "the Cult Awareness Network and the CIA's MK-Ultra program," and argues that thirty survivors of the fire possibly were murdered by FBI snipers.

* Ron Cole, author of *Sinister Twilight*, a pro-Davidian pamphlet that's less interesting than Cole's ongoing street theater. Hitting Waco after the April 19 fire, Cole styled himself as sort of a Son of Koresh, wearing a "DAVID KORESH: GOD ROCKS" T-shirt and vowing to buy and restore Koresh's Camaro. In late 1994, he and an ex-Davidian named Wally Kennett took part in an armed but ineffective effort to reclaim the Mt. Carmel property from Mrs. Amo Bishop Roden, a Branch Davidian who is squatting there. (Roden's former husband, George Roden, was the Branch Davidian's leader until he was routed in 1987 by Koresh.) Cole has recently been traveling among militia groups out west, and told *The Denver Post* the day after the explosion that it was "definitely connected" to Waco.

* Carol Valentine, a northern Virginian, who organized an April 19 Waco protest in front of the FBI building, called "A Day of Focus on U.S. Government Domestic Terrorism." Carol, like Linda Thompson, is "not convinced McVeigh did it at all. I think it's the Reichstag fire all over again."

* Carol Moore, of Washington D.C., who is currently writing *The Massacre of the Branch Davidians*, which will be published by Gun Owners of America, a northern Virginia gun-rights group. Among her claims: that the ATF conspired with the FBI to burn the compound, trying to hide the fact that it had used helicopter-borne machine guns during its initial raid.

* James Pate, a Maryland-based writer for *Soldier of Fortune* who has been using the Freedom of Information Act to pry loose Waco-related documents. The best journalist of the bunch, he says he can prove that, in violation of the Posse Comitatus Act, the ATF was "aided by U.S. Special Forces" in planning its attack.

* Ken Fawcett, a Texan who helped produce a video called *The Constitution Foundation of America/Ken Fawcett Theory*, which posits that the four dead ATF agents probably were felled by "friendly fire." At one point during the siege, Fawcett said on Engelman's radio show that he saw the Branch Davidians flash a Morse code signal one night that read: "Three die DDT milk."

Fawcett now says he's planning an expedition to scuba-dive in a five-acre pond near the Mt. Carmel site. Why? "I believe that the fire coming from the compound was extremely limited, and that it's possible *no*

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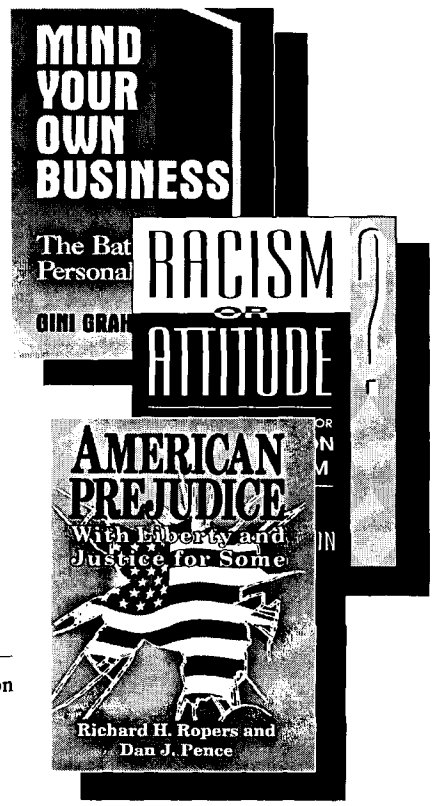

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shots were fired from that direction," he says. "I think I'll find bullets that, instead, can all be shown to have come from the law enforcement helicopters." Like other Waco outfits, his group, the Waco Independent Review Coalition, has strongly objected to early efforts to link the Oklahoma bombing to Waco.

Though their anger is real and deep, most of the Waco buffs are in a much tamer league than Thompson, whose zeal obviously rattles them. "Linda Thompson is a total flake, she's only out to make a buck, and she has all the tendencies of a demagogue," says Pate. Another foe, who wants to remain anonymous because "I'm scared of

Not so wacko

On last Sunday's "60 Minutes," when Lesley Stahl gingerly asked President Clinton if he had "any second thoughts" about the raid at Waco, he didn't hesitate. "Before that raid was carried out," Clinton fumed, "those people murdered a bunch of innocent law enforcement officials ... and when that raid occurred it was the people who ran that cult compound who murdered their own children, not the federal officials. They made the decision to destroy all the children that were there." You don't have to sympathize with those seeking vengeance for the raid, though, to recognize that some second thoughts are in order.

Start with last year's trial in which a jury found five of eleven surviving Branch Davidians guilty of manslaughter (not, as Clinton said, murder) in the deaths of four agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). The bureau claimed it had a video proving that the Davidians fired first during the ATF's February 28, 1993, raid. Yet it never produced the video at the trial, and Rolland Ballestros, one of the first ATF agents out of the cattle trucks, told Texas Rangers and Waco police shortly after the raid that he thought the first shots came from agents aiming at the Davidians' dogs. Besides, as Robert Cancro, chairman of the psychiatry department at the New York University Medical Center, commented in the Justice Department's report on the Waco operation: "Certainly an armed assault by 100 agents had to be seen as an attack *independent* of who fired the first shot.... The law does not usually allow the potential attacker to fire first before a response can be called self-defense."

Nor is it clear that the government should be absolved of blame for the fires in which eighty-one Branch Davidians died. The fires could, as the Justice Department claims, have been started by the Branch Davidians themselves, but many doubts remain. Federal officials have insisted that the CS gas (a potent form of tear gas) they lobbed into the Davidian compound was nonflammable. But according to U.S. Army manuals, there is a significant risk of inflammability from CS gas particulates. One U.S. Army Field Manual offers the following warning: "[W]hen using the dry agent CS1, do not discharge indoors. Accumulating dust may explode when exposed to spark or open flame." FBI officials testified after the April 19 fire that agents had thrown flash bang grenades—which can easily set off fires—into the compound during the gassing operation.

Federal officials also misrepresented the potential effects of the CS gas on the Davidians. A 1975 U.S. Army publication on the effects of CS gas notes, "Generally, persons reacting to CS are incapable of executing organized and concerted actions and excessive exposure to CS may make them incapable of vacating the area." According to Attorney General Janet Reno, the FBI hoped that pumping the gas into the compound would force people to flee outdoors. In fact, the gas itself may have prevented people from escaping.

Harvard University professor of law and psychiatry Alan Stone was one of the experts brought in by the Justice Department in 1993 to evaluate the agency's action at Waco. In a recent interview, Stone observed, "Some of the government's actions may have killed people before the fire started. I cannot tell whether the tanks knocked down places where people were already. I don't know if there were people in there crushed by the collapsing building [as a result of FBI tanks plowing into the structure] before the fire started."

Neither the ATF nor the FBI has made any apologies for their actions at Waco. Indeed, the ATF recently rehired two agents (with back pay) who were fired for lying about whether they knew that Koresh was expecting the initial ATF raid; the agents ordered the raid to proceed even after they were informed that Koresh was expecting an attack. James Jorgensen of the National Association of Treasury Agents denounced the rehiring last February: "This most recent callous action by the government is disgraceful. It defiles the memory of the brave ATF agents who gave their lives doing their duty."

All of this adds up to reason for skepticism about the federal government's version of what happened at Waco. It's not only right-wing lunatics who have such doubts. A Treasury Department report written by outside experts and issued in September 1993 found "disturbing evidence of flawed decision making, inadequate intelligence gathering, miscommunication, supervisory failures, and deliberately misleading post-raid statements about the raid and the raid plan by certain ATF supervisors." After the Justice Department issued its own considerably more favorable report on the FBI's performance at Waco (it repeatedly praised the agency for "remarkable restraint" during its gassing operation), *The New York Times* published an editorial called, "THE WACO WHITEWASH." Even Justice Department investigators could find no evidence for the rationale that Reno invoked for the FBI's final assault: the need to use gas and tanks to prevent Koresh from abusing children.

Yet the Clinton administration and some members of Congress, such as Democrat Charles Schumer of New York, have been adamantly opposed to any oversight hearings on the Waco raid. Last Saturday Schumer denounced one such hearing scheduled for next month: "We know what that was all about. That was an attack on the ATF. This [planned] hearing was simply some red meat to some of those extreme right forces." During the 1960s, conservative members of Congress reacted similarly to proposed oversight hearings on FBI abuses. Unfortunately, some liberals are now picking up the mantle.

JAMES BOVARD

JAMES BOVARD is the author of *Lost Rights: The Destruction of American Liberty* (1994).

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her," calls Thompson "the Merchant of Babylon"—a nod to the widespread perception that she's "profiting cynically off the dead of Waco." Thompson is especially resented, says Engelman, because her outer-limits beliefs make other researchers look frivolous by association.

Even so, it's unwise simply to shrug off Thompson's style of rhetoric, because she has probably been more effective at getting her message out than any other figure in the Waco conspiracy subculture. An attorney who has extensive contacts with militias all over the United States—among whose ranks *The Big Lie* is said to be quite popular—she maintains a computer bulletin board that contains reams of incendiary, downloadable material about Waco. She's also made it clear that she thinks violent action isn't a particularly bad idea. During the Waco siege, for example, Thompson organized a sizable group of "unorganized militia" to protest at a point about eight miles from the security perimeter, brandishing unloaded weapons. In July 1994 she was arrested in Indianapolis for using her car to block a bus carrying supporters of Clinton's health care plan. According to a 1994 report on the militia movement by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, police charged her with obstructing traffic, and during the arrest confiscated a .45-caliber pistol, a derringer and an assault rifle with 295 rounds of ammunition. Last fall, Thompson designated herself "acting adjutant general" of the "Unorganized Militia of the United States" and tried to organize a march on Washington, D.C., in which participants were supposed to be "armed and in uniform." Her demand was that Congress repeal the Fourteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Amendments to the Constitution, along with the Brady Bill and NAFTA. Ultimately, she was unable to gather enough support, and the scheme fizzled.

It's a safe bet that McVeigh was a fan of the *The Big Lie* tapes or of *Day 51*. On "Nightline" last week, a neighbor of McVeigh's said *Day 51* was a tape that serious Waco buffs might watch "over and over, a hundred times." With its talk of mind-control programs and essentially premeditated murder, *Day 51*, like Thompson's work, grows out of a milieu of quasi-apocalyptic brooding about what Waco signified.

Mosley could not be reached, but Dianna Bogard, a Dallas-based Waco buff who helped research the tape, says that she also believes the government is "probably" responsible for Oklahoma City. "The government is doing exactly what Nero did," she says politely. "They manufactured a crisis so they could crack down even more on our personal freedoms." She also explains that the fight for Waco justice is part of a larger battle between good and evil that is explained by her peculiar religious faith, Christian Identity. These are solely Bogard's beliefs and are not explored in *Day 51*, but they do illustrate themes sometimes voiced by the far-rightists incensed about Waco. According to this doctrine, which can be traced back to the writings of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British scholars who were on the

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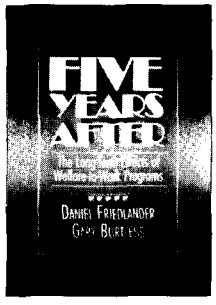

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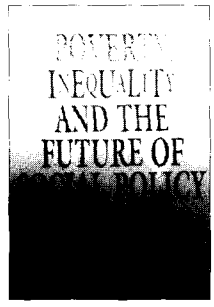

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religious fringe such as Richard Brothers, John Wilson and Edward Hine, the lost tribes of Israel made their way to—yes—Britain, and the course of history has seen a massive, tragic case of what Bogard calls "mistaken identity" as to who the Jews really are.

"We believe that the people of the Book, the people of Israel, are basically white Anglo-Saxon Christians," she says. The people who "call themselves the Jews" are actually a mongrel race with strains from three low-quality ancient tribes: the Edomites (that is, descendants of Esau, Jacob's "satanic" brother), the Canaanites ("Very evil people who practice child sacrifice and sexual pornography," says Bogard) and the Khazars ("an Asiatic tribe from the ninth century" whose members "pretended to be Jews" to stay out of trouble during raging conflicts between Christianity and Islam). As James Coates points out in his book, *Armed and Dangerous: The Rise of the Survivalist Right*, such beliefs are surprisingly widespread throughout the far right—there are even Christian Identity churches—and lead to very familiar conclusions.

"I believe the government, which is dominated by false Jews, functions as the Antichrist, as the embodiment of evil," says Bogard. Which Jews dominate government? "For example, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg." Is Clinton a Jew? "I have no idea what his ethnic group is. I *assume* he's a white Christian, but his fruits say something else." (Bogard is referring to the familiar line from the Sermon on the Mount: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.") "So even if he's not ethnically influenced by other blood, then he's just turned to his own dark side."

A final disturbing aspect of Oklahoma City is how quickly news of the bombing developed into a new conspiracy theory that, should anyone choose to believe it, is many times more nefarious than Waco conspiracy theory. The gestation, birth and mutation occurred at hyperspeed on the Thompsons' computerized news service and bulletin board, Associated Electronic Network News. To be fair, not everyone jumped on the bandwagon. "One thing seems crystal clear at the moment," reads one entry. "If the perps were motivated by revenge for perceived wrongs at Waco ... they managed to choose the worst possible way to respond." But this sentiment was quickly drowned out by dozens of entries, many of them written by Linda Thompson, that interpret events through a conspiratorial lens.

For example, at 10:40 a.m. on April 19, Thompson posted a NEWSFLASH about the explosion that read: "Half a federal building in Oklahoma City was blown up earlier this morning.... We don't know right now if it is where the FBI is located, however, Bob Ricks, of Waco, is from Oklahoma City and today is April 19, the second anniversary of Waco.... My guess on this is it could be: (1) CIA, tired of waiting on the concerned citizens; (2) ADL/FBI in order to blame it on 'militia.'"

Subsequent entries go on in the same manner:

"News media is already moved back over five blocks," Thompson wrote just after noon. "Helicopters are using a 'blur' lens, very obvious—this is fishy as all get out."

"News on CNN just said on the air that Carl Stern was in charge at the White House.... Carl Stern, well known in government cover-up circles."

"While all the media froths over the federal building in Oklahoma City, about what a tragedy it is, where were these same media when the government slaughtered ninety-six people, including twenty-five children, seventeen under the age of 5, in Waco, Texas?... Are the lives of feds' children worth more? Are feds' lives worth more than the lives of 'ordinary' American citizens?

"Sure they are. Just watch. The 'perpetrators' (or someone framed as the perpetrators) will be arrested within days."

Neither of the Thompsons nor Bogard thinks right-wingers actually committed the crime, so naturally they don't feel guilty because their work may have inspired it. For Linda, it's simply a matter of asking: Who benefits? Certainly not the Branch Davidians, she says. Now that an angry public sees them (falsely) as being indirectly responsible for the crime of the decade, they'll be hated even more. But why would the government do it?

"A lot of this is just too convenient," says Al. "Every time there's a gun control bill pending in Congress, someone goes and shoots a bunch of people. Now there's this Omnibus Counterterrorism Bill of 1995. New hearings on Waco were supposed to happen next month, but now they won't. Meanwhile, on Saturday, Hillary and Bill Clinton got interviewed under oath by Starr on Whitewater. If Oklahoma hadn't happened people would have paid attention to that. And how many federal law enforcement officers were killed? I've heard there were none, and I find that very interesting."

On its own eerie terms, much of this is true, at least if you judge by "the fruits." The Clintons did have to testify on Saturday, April 22—and nobody noticed. On Sunday, warning that "those who trouble their own house will inherit the wind," Clinton vowed to push through exactly what the far right loathes most: broad new power to fight domestic terrorism, including increased surveillance and infiltration, broader wiretap capability and easier access to credit records of suspected terrorists. Representative Bill McCollum, chairman of the subcommittee on crime, has talked about holding hearings, but, as an opponent of the idea observed on CNN last week, there's a good chance those will be canceled now. And, he added, that's good, because Congress has already investigated the matter thoroughly.

Who was it that said this, with a smile of satisfaction on his face? None other than that notorious Democratic Khazar from New York, Representative Charles Schumer. Linda Thompson knows what to make of that, and it might surprise you. "First thing, Schumer's CIA." Is Schumer's Jewishness a factor? "That's probably irrelevant. I've found out that those ADL people, even though a lot of them are Jewish, they don't give a damn about the Jewish people. Schumer's real agenda is to destroy President Clinton, who I've just come to realize is not all that bad. In fact, this whole Oklahoma City thing may have been a setup to get him. Clinton's like, he's like in a little cookie jar up there." •

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SLEAZY GENIUS

By John B. Judis

I first heard it from a press aide, then from Undersecretary of Commerce Mary Good, and, by week's end, the venerable cliché had lodged itself in my brain. "Throwing the baby out with the bathwater" well enough sums up the Commerce Department's worries about its future. Good used it to describe the dangers of reorganizing the department, but it applies equally to the dangers of ousting Commerce Secretary Ron Brown. Would Brown's resignation, in a pool of scandalous bathwater, doom the department itself, already under merciless attack from Republicans in Congress?

The irony is that, under Brown, the Commerce Department, once a garbage dump for misbegotten programs and party hacks, has become a powerhouse government agency. Commerce has taken the lead in winning multibillion-dollar export contracts in India, Saudi Arabia and the Far East. The department has also successfully adapted many of the high-tech programs that used to be run through the Pentagon. And Commerce has become a player in a new foreign policy shaped by economic competition rather than military threat. Of course, Brown's tenure hasn't been perfect—he has resisted reasonable plans for reorganizing the department and has been a prime architect of a flawed China policy—but, overall, Brown has been one of the administration's few successes.

Yet Brown's future and that of his department are in doubt. Accumulating evidence points to Brown's having withheld or misrepresented pertinent information on his federal disclosure forms and to his having received illegal payments while in office. He could be gone by this fall. Meanwhile, presidential candidate Bob Dole, eager to appear more conservative than his rivals, is joining House freshman Republicans in calling for the Commerce Department's elimination, while Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Jesse Helms has proposed moving Commerce's export responsibilities to the State Department. Before long, Brown and his department could be history.

Ron Brown's rise sums up much that has changed in Washington over the last thirty years. Brown is a product of a black middle class that in the wake of the civil rights movement has come to play an increasingly important role in the Democratic Party. He is also a product of an amoral and corrupting legal and lobbying culture that emerged in the last two decades in the wake of regulatory reforms and of growing trade battles between U.S. and foreign firms. Yet, as some of his critics fail to grasp, he is also a two-century-old Washington phenomenon.

Brown's critics privately liken him to Washington Mayor Marion Barry as another black street hustler who (to quote one such critic) "doesn't think he has to pay attention to the same rules as white politicians." But Brown is following the same pattern as American politicians from Daniel Webster to Lyndon Johnson. These men came to Washington having tasted but not really having enjoyed the luxuries of life, and, once here, were determined to fit in. Sometimes that meant becoming dependent on wealthy benefactors, using their political influence for private gain and doing things that clashed with their own moral convictions.

Brown was born into a well-to-do, but not wealthy, black family. His father was the manager of Harlem's famous Hotel Theresa, which catered to black entertainers and celebrities. Brown was raised and later worked among people who were far richer and who enjoyed the highest luxuries as a matter of course. Brown, who is now 53, moved to Washington in 1973 as a vice president of the Urban League. In 1980 he worked in Senator Edward Kennedy's presidential campaign. In 1981, after serving briefly as chief counsel to Kennedy's Judiciary Committee, Brown joined the law firm of Patton, Boggs & Blow, one of Washington's most powerful and unprincipled lobbying firms. At Patton, Boggs, Brown had his main chance and took it.

As a lawyer and lobbyist, Brown not only signed up a host of Japanese companies but also Zaire and Haiti, which was then ruled by "Baby Doc" Duvalier. From 1982 to 1986, Brown was paid $12,500 a month for doing public relations work for the Duvaliers. He remained active in Democratic politics—becoming deputy chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 1982 and chairman in 1989—but he appeared to use this political clout to further unsavory business schemes. These included serving on the board of Chemfix, a Louisiana-based waste-management firm that through no accomplishment of its own won a major contract with New York City in 1990, and founding Capital/PEBSCO, a financial management firm that, despite little demonstrable

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expertise, won the contract to manage Washington D.C.'s public employee pension funds.

The Chemfix deal in particular reeked. In April 1990, Brown's friend and political ally, New York City Mayor David Dinkins, awarded a $210 million contract to a joint venture of Chemfix and another company, even though Chemfix's poor performance had already lost it contracts in four cities. After the sale, with Chemfix's stock soaring, the company rewarded Brown by allowing him to buy new stock at 24 percent the public price. Two months later Brown awarded Dinkins and New York with the 1992 Democratic National Convention. Although no one could prove it, the most plausible explanation for Chemfix getting the contract was Brown's influence and the promise of the convention.

As secretary of Commerce, Brown does not seem to have initiated any new deals, but he continued some questionable old ones, including an arrangement with Nolanda Hill, a controversial, flamboyant Texas wheeler-dealer fond of showing up at business meetings on a motorcycle. Brown's connection with Hill might have gone unnoticed had it not come to the attention of William Clinger, an obscure congressman from State College, Pennsylvania, who in 1993 was the ranking minority member of the Government Operations Committee, which was in charge of reviewing official disclosure statements.

In the summer of 1993, the House Republican leadership asked Clinger to look into charges by a Vietnamese businessman living in Florida that Brown had accepted a $700,000 bribe from the Vietnamese government to ease its relations with the United States. Clinger never uncovered anything new about the bribe, and the Justice Department eventually cleared Brown of bribery charges. In reviewing Brown's disclosure statement, however, Clinger's aide Phil Larsen was struck by "a bunch of funny little companies that nobody has heard of and that were involved in communication." Larsen suspected a possible conflict of interest. Then, in November 1993, *The Washington Post* ran a story about Corridor Broadcasting, a firm owned by Hill that operated two television stations. Corridor had defaulted on two loans, totaling almost $40 million, that had originally been granted by an S&L, but had fallen into the hands of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation when the bank folded. While taxpayers had to make up the loans' cost, Hill's seemingly insolvent firm was contributing many thousands of dollars to the Democratic Party. The story also noted that Brown was Hill's business partner in First International Communications Corp. and in Harmon International, which leased television equipment to Corridor.

In February 1994, Clinger wrote Brown asking him to explain what First International and other firms did in order to rule out the possibility of a conflict of interest between his holdings and his responsibilities as Commerce secretary, which included funding for the new information highway. Clinger also asked Brown if he had financial interest in Corridor, which he had not listed in his disclosure statement. Clinger's letter was polite, even deferential, and his request for information fell within the purview of his committee. A month later, Clinger got a terse reply from the Commerce Department assistant counsel denying that Brown had a "financial interest" in Corridor and either dismissing or not answering his other questions. That began a classic pattern of official stonewalling that whetted Clinger's and Larsen's appetite for information and that involved Brown in what were at best misrepresentations of his own situation.

The Republican victory in November elevated Clinger to the chairmanship of the Government Operations Committee, with the power to hold hearings. In January, a hitherto defiant Brown, now eager to explain himself, sent Clinger a three-page single-spaced letter detailing the steps he had taken to rule out any conflict of interest. He said that because of "unfair press inquiries" into First International, he had decided to divest his interest in that company in December 1993. But Clinger and Larsen would soon have reasons to doubt Brown's explanation.

In January, one of the enemies that Nolanda Hill made during her business career made available to Larsen and Clinger copies of three checks for $45,000 each that had been issued by First International to Brown in April, July and October of 1993. At the same time, Clinger and Larsen also learned that First International's only asset was a promissory note for $875,000 from Corridor and that the two companies shared offices, telephones, checkbooks and employees. They discovered that in spite of never making a single payment on its FDIC-backed loans, Corridor had continued to repay its loan from First International (at one point, at a $35,000-per-week clip) and to pay expenses for First International activities.

Brown himself was being paid, in effect, by a company to which he claimed to have no connection. So was his family. His son Michael leased equipment to Corridor. His wife was a vice president of Corridor. His daughter, who was attending school in New York, was paid $12,500 for the use of her mailing address and fax machine. The Corridor-First International connection looked like a typical shell game ("swindle" is the less polite term) in which the winners were Hill and Brown and the losers were the taxpayers who had to make up the defaulted loans. Larsen came to suspect, he told me, that the promissory note was merely "paper that allowed money to flow from Corridor to First International." In addition, Brown had not reported the checks as income on his annual disclosure form but had insisted they were part of a $400,000 payment, along with the assumption of several large loans, for divesting his interest in First International—an interest for which he had not invested anything himself. But the checks were clearly labeled "partnership distribution" and had been issued well before Brown had said he was divesting his share. (The loan repayments also took place not in December but months later.)

The three checks and the promissory note turned what had been an ethical fine point into, apparently, a clear violation of the law that occurred while Brown was

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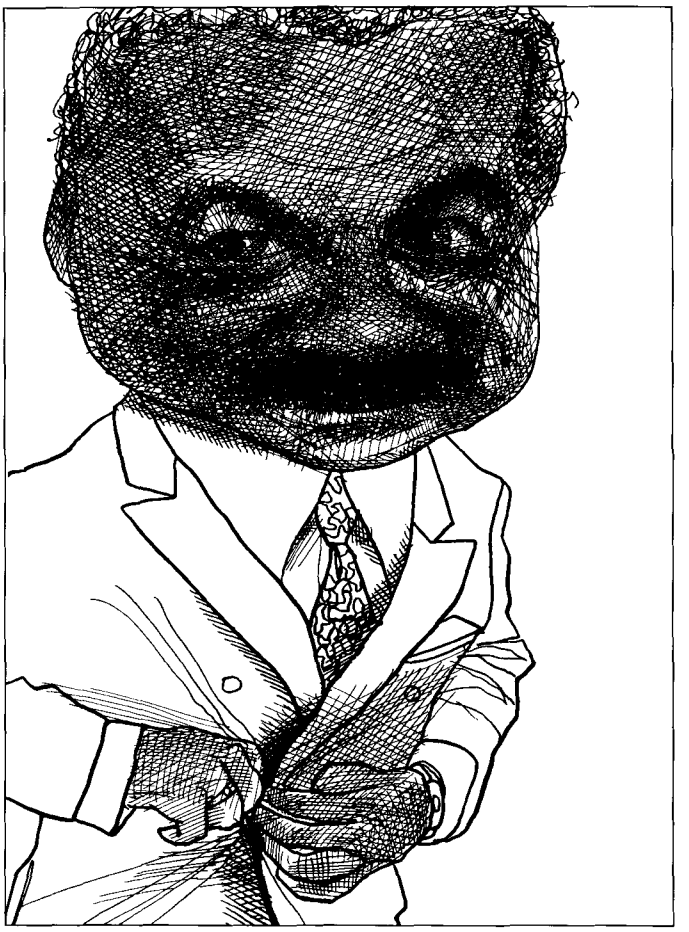
secretary of Commerce. A host of new revelations have followed—from a Washington house that a Brazilian businessman seems to have purchased for Brown to slum housing that Brown bought as a tax write-off—all of which have pointed to Brown's attempts to conceal the nature of his business holdings. On February 27, Clinger wrote to Attorney General Janet Reno requesting an independent counsel to investigate Brown. Clinger charged, among other things, that Brown had broken the law by submitting "incomplete, inaccurate and misleading financial disclosure statements," supplementing his salary and misinforming and refusing to respond to Congress.

These charges are serious and could bring Brown down. Clinger has hinted of more to come. But what has been uncovered so far suggests little more than personal, even petty, corruption. Clinger is charging Brown with conflict of interest, but the incidents are either minor or tangential. "We're admittedly a little weak on that," Larsen says. Brown is suspected of arranging for Nolanda Hill to attend two White House luncheons in 1993. And he won a large telecommunications contract with Saudi Arabia for AT&T, which is the sole customer of a small company in which Brown has an interest.



RON BROWN BY JOHN SPRINGS FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

No one has unearthed compelling evidence that Brown is using the Commerce Department budget to pay off Democratic contributors or bigwigs in the way that Reagan administration officials used HUD. Both Clinger's staff and the Center for Public Integrity are investigating any correlation between contributions to Democrats and candidates and business participation in Brown's overseas journeys, but the most anyone has discovered so far is the participation of a Denver Democratic consultant as an advance man for Brown's trips. From the existing evidence, Brown's corrupt practices appear incidental to his principal preoccupation: running and revitalizing the Commerce Department.

There is another theory of Brown that sees the talents and interests that contribute to his questionable dealmaking—among these, his risk-taking, his willingness to skirt the edge of legality—as integral to his success as Commerce secretary. Some of Brown's backers, who believe he is guilty as charged but want him to stick around because of his sheer effectiveness, often embrace this theory. But like the view of Brown as a street hustler, this doesn't do justice to his talents.

Brown has never been wildly successful as an entrepreneur. He has become wealthy, but no more so than the average neurosurgeon or corporate lawyer who has extra money to invest. Brown is no Peter Angelos or Edward Bennett Williams, who made so much as lawyers they were able to spend their free time buying and running multimillion-dollar sports teams. But as a party leader and Cabinet secretary, Brown has shown brilliance. The party chair who helped bring about Clinton's election became the most formidable Commerce secretary since Herbert Hoover. Brown's private dealmaking bears the same relation to these public activities that Pete Rose's compulsive gambling bore to his baseball skills. It is the dark side of—rather than the secret to—his success. It's evidence of his weakness—shown most vividly in his reckless liaison with Nolanda Hill—not his strength.

I first saw Brown's strengths on display at a small private meeting that took place soon after he had become chairman of the Democratic Party in January 1989. Many of the conservative Democrats at that meeting were extremely hostile to Brown because they associated him with Jesse Jackson, whom Brown had represented at the Democratic Convention the prior summer. But it took Brown about a half-hour to win them over completely. When he finished, they applauded, as if they had witnessed a performance on stage. How had he done it? Brown can be ingratiating without appearing to fawn, and he rarely finds himself at a loss in a political discussion. He is a superb conciliator who can sense quickly what to concede to placate potential foes.

But Brown is also willing to toss aside old commitments in order to achieve a greater objective. That is the part of Brown that does resemble the illicit schemer. That particular afternoon, Brown subtly, without ever saying so explicitly, assured these Democrats that he would try to make sure Jesse Jackson did not run in '92. He convinced them that his commitment to building the party and winning in '92 was greater than his com-

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mitment to Jackson and to Jackson's voters. Brown was ready, he signaled, to abandon old loyalties to get a new job done.

Brown has operated in much the same single-minded way as secretary of Commerce. When he became secretary, business leaders had some reason to fear he'd pay close heed to labor unions, to minority groups and to lobbyists for foreign firms. Just before Brown's appointment, someone who used to lobby for Japan told me that Brown, who was still working for Patton, Boggs & Blow, was scurrying about to arrange a private pre-inaugural dinner for Japanese business leaders with Clinton.

As secretary of Commerce, however, Brown has shown American business that he is entirely their man. When he has had to choose between his new clients and his old supporters—for instance, over the North American Free Trade Agreement—he has sided with business. Partly because of Brown's work at Commerce, Clinton's administration is the most pro-business since that of Calvin Coolidge.

Brown inherited a Commerce Department that was in much the same shape that the Democratic Party had been in after Michael Dukakis's defeat in 1988. Created in 1903 by Theodore Roosevelt, Commerce was originally intended to regulate corporate conduct through a Bureau of Corporations. Under Hoover, it came to stress measures that would encourage productivity and prevent ruinous price wars. Soon after, however, Commerce steadily degenerated—from being an indiscriminate service center for individual businesses into a gigantic, leaden bureaucracy. As one 1980s Commerce official put it, "We spent enormous amounts of time doing memos in quintuplicate."

Commerce had also acquired agencies that had no relation to each other or to the department's original mission, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (which contains the Weather Bureau!), the Bureau of the Census and even the National Aquarium, which it runs out of its Constitution Avenue basement. In the '60s, Commerce acquired the Economic Development Administration, a legacy of Johnson's War on Poverty that could just as easily have gone to HUD or the Department of Labor. During the '80s, Congress tried to focus Commerce on promoting high technology by including provisions to create a National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in the 1988 Omnibus Trade Bill. But the Bush White House, skeptical about anything resembling industrial policy, gave these initiatives low priority. They became another part of the indigestible stew of unrelated agencies.

Brown's main achievement has been to invigorate the department's export and technology programs. Before Brown's arrival, the department's export programs reflected at best the America of the 1950s: lackadaisical and complacent, suited to a domestic-oriented economy. According to a recent study, federal export promotion in 1991 amounted to 2.9 percent of the sales value of total manufactured exports, compared to 23.4 percent in France and 51.4 percent in Japan. When Brown took office, exporters were also hamstrung by 1,500 pages of cold war-era export-control regulations. These included restrictions on the sale of pre-Macintosh Apple computers to Eastern Europe.

Brown removed many of the unnecessary export controls, increased funding for export promotion and took a personal hand in securing contracts for U.S. companies. Brown has helped win the kind of large aerospace and telecommunications contracts that private firms often can't get themselves, particularly if they are arrayed against foreign firms and their governments. These have included a $6 billion contract for aircraft and a $4 billion contract for telecommunications from Saudi Arabia, $6 billion in high technology contracts from China and another $7 billion from India. These deals didn't just enrich individual firms but sustained entire industries. Prior to Brown's arrival, Commerce also ignored small business in its export program. This again reflected the first cold war decades, when most American small businesses produced entirely for the domestic market. Brown has made a point of inviting small businesses along on his trade trips.

It may turn out that Brown has used his export promotion to solicit contributions for the Democrats, but none of the businessmen or reporters who I interviewed could recall any instance of this. Moreover, business leaders emphasize that Brown has not chosen his companions on partisan grounds. Marty Duggan, president of the Small Business Exporters' Association, who describes himself as a conservative Republican, says that Brown "has included our people regardless of political affiliation."

Brown has also given priority to promoting high technology. In the past, most federal support for applied science and technology came through the Defense Department. The cold war's end sharply reduced the Pentagon's role in subsidizing new computer and aerospace technology, and growing competition from abroad has constrained corporate research efforts, which are now limited to applications that promise a near-term payoff. That has left unfunded the kind of R&D—between pure science and commercial marketing—that has been integral to America's industrial advances. Under Brown, Commerce has begun to assume the roles of the Pentagon and the corporate labs.

Funding for the National Institute of Standards and Technology has almost doubled to $900 million since Clinton took office, although it is a fraction of that spent by American rivals on technological development. The institute's main programs are the Advanced Technology Project, which jointly funds projects with industry, and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership, which provides 100 centers across the country that assist small- and medium-sized businesses in introducing new technology. It's too early to render a verdict, but just as with Brown's trade policies, his efforts in technology are enthusiastically backed by business and by technology experts. Says Chuck Wessner, a Commerce Department official from 1985 to 1993 who is now with the National Academy of Sciences, "The fact that the programs have been over-

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subscribed and that companies are willing to put up their own money is a powerful suggestion that these programs have the potential to offer real benefits."

Brown's chief failing is that he has been, if anything, too zealous in pursuing the interests of business. He has put aside not only old commitments but anything that gets in the way of the immediate interests of his department's clients. This has been particularly true in Brown's dealings with China. He helped McDonnell Douglas sign contracts that commit it to producing airplanes in China not merely for the Chinese market, but for export back to the United States, potentially threatening the jobs of American aerospace workers. With Brown's encouragement, both McDonnell Douglas and Boeing are helping the Chinese develop a rival aircraft industry. "Brown is promoting companies, not jobs," says Randy Barber of the Committee for Economic Organizing, who is completing a study of the American aerospace industry.

Brown has also lobbied successfully within the administration to remove a fee that the U.S. government had charged to countries that bought arms from American producers. The fee was used to recoup Pentagon and taxpayer research costs that had gone into the production of the weapons by private companies. Arms producers claimed it made their exports less competitive, but there is little evidence of this. Says arms expert Kenneth Timmerman, director of the Middle East Data Project, "It's a modest charge, and affects only the most marginal sales. Removing it is cheating the American people."

Brown also may have gone too far in removing export controls on products with potential military uses. Timmerman wrote last month in *The American Spectator* that the Commerce Department labeled "civilian," and therefore not subject to export control, a gas turbine engine that could be used in a new Chinese cruise missile. By subordinating foreign policy to commerce, Brown has clearly damaged American interests. Whether this says more about the weakness of the State Department than the strength of Commerce is another matter.

Brown has also failed to reinvent the Commerce Department's structure. The Bureau of the Census or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration would be better off as separate agencies. The government's trade functions—divided among thirty-two different Cabinet departments and agencies—would be better off concentrated in one Cabinet department. And some Commerce bureaus such as the Economic Development Administration have become mired in procedure and need to be completely overhauled.

But Brown resisted proposals from Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review. Gore's staff recommended that the Economic Development Administration be folded into a new independent economic development corporation that included the Small Business Administration and other development programs from the Departments of Labor, Agriculture and Defense. Brown vetoed this idea, and Gore's group ended up recommending a weak coordinating council for the different agencies. Brown's refusal to consider plans for reorganizing and downsizing Commerce has lent credence to the much more radical proposals that Republicans have begun to make.

In Congress, freshman Republicans have taken the lead in calling for the outright elimination of the Commerce Department. At a February 14 press conference, the freshmen, backed by letters of support from the Christian Coalition, the Conservative Campaign Fund and experts in business administration, announced the formation of a working group mandated to "dismantling" the Commerce Department. Its chairman is Representative Dick Chrysler, a former small businessman who declared that "the free market works best in promoting commerce." Chrysler urged abolishing the department's technology programs and, echoing Helms, called for turning Commerce's trade functions over to the State Department, which, historically, has opposed an aggressive trade strategy as an impediment to diplomacy.

There are real questions of how to reorganize the government's trade and technology functions, and how government should work with industries to develop technology and manufacturing processes, but they are practical, not ideological. Most Republicans are perfectly aware of this. Dole, Newt Gingrich, Dick Armey and a majority of House and Senate Republicans backed the 1988 trade bill that expanded the Commerce Department's responsibilities for trade and technology. But now many Republicans hope to ride a tide of anti-government hysteria and don't seem to care whether America's export and technology programs get gutted in the process.

What of Ron Brown? Attorney General Janet Reno responded to Clinger's February letter by appointing a committee to advise her whether to appoint an independent counsel. If she does so, Brown may be forced out, though he will likely be able to hang onto office through the year. If Reno decides not to appoint someone, Clinger will hold hearings that could prove even more embarrassing to Brown and the administration.

If Brown is forced to resign, Republicans and neoliberals will applaud. I will have mixed feelings. Public officials should not be allowed to conceal their private dealings, particularly when they have been involved in bilking the Treasury and the taxpayers. Yet, as many a Chicagoan will tell you, political corruption can coexist with effective government. Sorry, but I'll take the old Richard Daley machine over John Lindsay's New York City administration, speaker Jim Wright over speaker Tom Foley, and chairman Dan Rostenkowski over chairman Al Ullman.

In judging the relevance of a politician's corruption, what matters most is his overriding goal: Is it to perform his job well or to enrich himself? If an official is corrupt, is it incidental or integral to how he does his job? Warren Harding's infamous Interior Secretary Albert Fall refused an appointment to the Supreme Court because he wanted to keep getting payoffs from wealthy oilmen. Whatever Brown's faults, he has appeared to put his job first. If he has to go, the Clinton administration will lose the one clear Cabinet success it has. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Altar Ego

One term in current cant makes me especially wary: controversial. A film heralded as controversial is quite often creaky in itself—merely a subject for debate by people not much interested in film as such. That's not true of **Priest** (Miramax). The first time I saw it, its felicities of acting and directing were clear; nonetheless, it seemed designed, in a quite blatant way, to be controversial.

Consider. It begins with an elderly priest in Liverpool, apparently burned out in his vocation, who takes a large crucifix from the wall of his church and carries it on his shoulder through the streets, followed by children. ("Oh, Lord," I muttered secularly.) He proceeds to his bishop's palace and hurls the crucifix through the window.

A young priest, Father Greg, fiercely devout, is assigned to replace him. One evening soon after he arrives, Greg changes into mufti and bicycles to a bar to pick up a mate. It's a gay bar. We've already learned that Father Matthew, the older priest with whom Greg boards, sleeps with his housekeeper. She is black.

Father Greg hears a confession by a 14-year-old girl, Lisa, in which she reluctantly admits that her father is molesting her. He urges her to tell her mother, but she can't do it. She has a nervous fit in school; even so, Lisa's father, suspecting Greg's interference, warns him, in a diabolical defense of incest, to piss off.

Father Greg, torn between his compassion for the child and his obligation to keep confessional secrets, implores Christ for a miracle to save the child. Then, in a sequence so gross that it jars this generally well-made film, Greg's prayer is intercut with a sequence in Lisa's home where her father is taking her to bed. Lisa's mother arrives home sooner than expected. She has been at a church meeting that Greg dismissed early—with no foreknowledge of what she would discover in her bedroom. The implication, blunt and heavy, is that Jesus heard Greg's prayer and intervened to save the child.

More. There's Greg and his newly acquired lover, Graham. How could Greg not have foreseen that some day Graham would discover his occupation? Why would Greg further have risked discovery by the police in a parked car with Graham? These are all patent ingredients in the controversy stew.

After Greg's arrest and the vulgar newspaper glee, he takes twenty-two tablets of Seconal. Another violation of Church doctrine. (Hamlet, a fervent Catholic, wishes "that the Everlasting had not fix'd His canon 'gainst self-slaughter.") So Greg is a cleric who chooses which priestly vows to keep and which to break. In fact the only vow he keeps, of the several tested in the film, is that of the confessional. Which makes his loyalty to that particular vow more a plot device than an obligation.

After he recovers in a hospital, after he spends some time in a quasi-medieval (and quite funny) retreat for priests, he accepts Father Matthew's invitation to come back and celebrate Mass jointly in their old church. Half the congregation walks out on the gay priest. Almost all the others go up to Matthew for Communion. The exception is Lisa, who takes her wafer from Greg. Weeping, he falls into her arms as she weeps, too. A solo piano plays "You'll Never Walk Alone" from *Carousel* by Rodgers and Hammerstein. The End. (With no hint about Father Greg's future.)

Well, after that first viewing, I thought I would wait to observe the controversy. It came, in two predictable sorts: outrage from some Catholics, defense from some liberals who were undisturbed by the matters that bothered the Catholics. When all this had fumed for a while on both sides, I thought it was time to see *Priest* again. (By weird coincidence, it was on Good Friday. No divine injunction: I just had free time on that day.) And now I'm sure that, as between the two sides in the controversy, the truth does not lie somewhere in the middle. Both sides have points to make, but, for me, the truth is that *Priest* is so acutely directed, so rewardingly acted, that its texture as film prevails over both its sensationalism (in one view) and its candor (in another).

This is the second feature by Antonia Bird, who has directed for more than fifteen years in the English theater and has also done much TV. Her empathy with actors is evident. From Robert Pugh, the incestuous father, she gets deep-buried, terrifying conviction. From Christine Tremarco, as the daughter, Bird gets tacit, desperately frightened hurt. Tom

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Circle of Friends. *A rarity—a picture made to be charming that actually charms. Youthful romance, troubles and triumphs, in an Irish village. (Reviewed 4/10/95).* **Dolores Claiborne.** *Kathy Bates, suspected twice of murder, gives this Stephen King thriller outsize verity. Taylor Hackford directs well-blended time-strands and captures the tang of the Maine coast. (4/17/95)* **The Madness of King George.** *George the Third, in one of his earliest seizures, used as parallel for current troubles. Magnificently directed by Nicholas Hytner. Nigel Hawthorne both regal and risible as George. (1/30/95)* **Mina Tannenbaum.** *Two Jewish girls grow up as friends in postwar Paris, with many discoveries along the way about each other and themselves. Much delicacy and wit, considerable rue. (3/27/95)* **—SK**

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Wilkinson gives Father Matthew an attractive slightly wearied warmth, and Robert Carlyle gives Graham loneliness and gratitude.

Linus Roache, as Father Greg, is flawless but not much more. Of course the demands on him are heavier than on any of the others, and he never fails, but neither does he overwhelm. Roache is a perfectly sound actor in a role that could have used Kenneth Branagh or Ralph Fiennes.

Bird has a cunning eye with the camera. Often she compresses people into close space (a shot past the open door of an armoire, a shot up a stairwell) to suggest the world closing in on the spirit. And with her editor, Susan Spivey, she slips in quick reaction shots the way a child touches a hoop to keep it rolling. (But I'm still puzzled by that *Carousel* finish. The fact that the song occurs earlier at a church party is small excuse. At the end it's Bird's music, not the congregation's.)

The screenplay by Jimmy McGovern is skillfully turned, with some apparent first-hand knowledge and—more apparent the second time—with wit. (When Greg, in mufti, is booked by the police after his arrest in the car and at last admits that he's a priest, the sergeant looks up from the register, smiles quietly and says, "Little devil.") The worst flaw in the script is not McGovern's sensationalism but Father Matthew's several attacks on the pharisaism of the Church. It's rank college-dorm stuff.

At the last, the picture leaves us with some questions, mostly raised by its monosyllabic title, *Priest*. It sounds taxonomic, as if it described the profession today. Neither I nor probably anyone else in or out of the Church can pronounce on the film's typicalness. Does anyone know how many priests break their vows of celibacy? How many do it with males? How many priests are tormented by the seal of the confessional when they could help someone? (Not a new conflict in drama.) But surely all these are the more predictable questions about priests, particularly in this oh-so-candid age. Surely there are more interesting questions.

Once I spent a couple of days as a guest lecturer at a college run by Benedictines, where the drama department was doing Williams, Beckett, Pinter, etc. I asked one of the drama-teaching monks, no doubt naïvely, how, after all this modern material, he dealt in the confessional with such subjects as premarital and extramarital sex. He said, "I tell them not to bother me with stuff like that. I ask them if they have done anything really grave. For instance, have they broken a promise to a child?"

Clearly that is not canon law. Still, I've

Jews and the New American Scene

Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab

Raphael Soyer, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution

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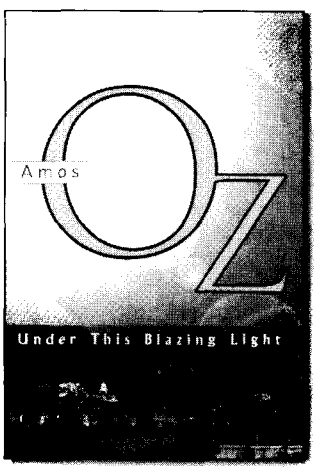
Amos Oz



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never been able to forget him, and he's one, though only one, of the reasons why I think the best picture about a modern priest is *The Mass Is Ended*, an Italian film written and directed by Nanni Moretti, with himself in the leading role. Moretti's protagonist deals with the *spiritual* problems of his flock that confront a priest today. Anyone can succumb to physical temptations in violation of vows: you don't have to be a priest for that. Violation of the confessional has plenty of analogies for lay persons. But today's challenges to religious faith, with which a priest must either succeed or fail—they are what really grip. Moretti faced them squarely in a masterly work of art. *Priest* is much less. •

Victoria's Secret

BY DAVID BROMWICH

The De-Moralization of Society: From Victorian Virtues to Modern Values by Gertrude Himmelfarb

(Knopf, 314 pp., $24)

Gertrude Himmelfarb believes American society is close to a crisis of disorder, and this state of things demands that we take manners seriously. In a tranquil time, manners, which Hobbes called "small morals," do not require much reflection; but good manners are never their own reward, and bad manners are never their own punishment. They are the motion on the surface that tells of a life beneath. That a racist remark among educated persons is felt to be low may be an achievement of manners only, but the achievement has a power over conduct that could hardly be equaled by a law prohibiting the remark. Nor is the influence of decayed manners less significant than that of improved manners. The fact that thousands daily share the intimacies of their lives on television and radio probably assures that such confessions will not soon become an indictable offense; but the widening appeal of this way of talking, and its gradual passage into habit, have a corrosive effect on shame that no law could offset.

These are truths the lawyers can make us forget, but the novelists make us remember, and a historian of culture is bound to side with the novelists. The Victorian novelists most of all: Trollope took down manners like an inspired clerk, George Eliot looked at them as calmly as a saint at a skull, Hardy heard in a dying man's curse the pangs of a slight from his youth. But Himmelfarb's book is not just about the Victorians. It is about the Victorians and us, and its subtitle promises that the earlier period will be brought in to testify against ours, its virtues shown to be more deeply founded in experience than our values.

That promise is sealed in an epilogue that, with many up-to-date graphs and statistics, makes almost a separate pamphlet. Here Himmelfarb passes from history to prophecy. She thinks that a relativist ideology that is in principle averse to judgment has pared down morality to a useless minimum. Violent crime, the rising numbers of illegitimate children, the breakup of families and the danger of welfare dependency: all these elements of our crisis have a precedent in the Victorian age, and Himmelfarb believes they may be ameliorable by an attack from the older virtues. This final stretch of the book acknowledges a debt to James Q. Wilson, Charles Murray and the circle of intellectuals and policymakers broadly associated with *The Public Interest* and the American Enterprise Institute, and it will be read by many who pass over the earlier chapters.

But the credit one gives to Himmelfarb's reading of American society ought to depend in part on the credence one gives to her reading of the Victorians. The manner of her narrative is restrained. The materials of the book are anecdotes, quotations and lists, with such caption-biographies as the description of Ruskin as "an art critic who was also a critic of capitalism." The chapter topics are striking, not clearly linked but clearly enough sharing a popular interest: the relation of morals and manners; the idea of the gentleman and "the angel in the house"; feminism and its surprising array of thoughtful opponents; the distinction between paupers and the deserving poor; voluntary philanthropy as against state supervision of the indigent; "The Jew as Victorian" (the only chapter that stays long in a single focus); and the feminist and homosexual components of what Himmelfarb is prepared to call "a late Victorian 'counterculture'." The cast of characters shifts, as a rule, every two or three pages, making the narrative short-winded, and without the past-and-present structure the argument would elude summary.

Himmelfarb's earlier studies of Acton, Darwin and John Stuart Mill showed a persistent concern with the shaping power of ideas. The title of her collection of essays, *Victorian Minds*, was among other things a counter-irritant to such titles as *Victorian Cities* and *Victorian People*. "They had minds, too," she was saying, "and they thought." By contrast, *The De-Moralization of Society* deals with minds only in relation to bodies—bodies to be regulated or punished or (with usually dire effects) liberated. The chief scholarly interest of the book is therefore its apparent polemic against those cultural historians who denounce Victorian society for its coercive ideology.

The customs of family life, the forms of recreation permitted or forbidden, the religious temper of philanthropy and indeed the interest in public benevolence of any kind, have been traced alike to a motive of "social control." Himmelfarb is disposed to contest this formulation when she finds it in the work of other Victorianists. But as it turns out, she disagrees less with their description than with their scorn for the phenomenon they are describing. She approves of the forceful influence of legislation on morals and the persuasive influence of morals on manners. The social disciplines of the Victorians could not have worked without a belief that conformity was a necessary element of social cohesiveness. Victorian morality took stock of the well-being of people, and by definition that included their moral being.

It was in the nature of Victorian manners that not everyone qualified as a beneficiary of social assistance. In *The Age of Equipoise*, W.L. Burn described the attitude dryly: "That there would always be an improvident, irresponsible mass, many of them potentially or actively criminal, milling about at the foot of the social ladder, was not a conception to which the mid-century took kindly," for the age was notable for "a certain hardening of opinion, an unwillingness to bother too much or beyond a certain point with people who were making a nuisance of themselves." You will not find quite so conclusive a judgment in Himmelfarb. But she does share much of the mid-Victorian mood—its assurance and impatience regarding the obstacles to reform, its freedom from generalized

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self-doubt, its belief in the propriety of certain remedies and the limited good to be expected from them—and she writes to show us the understanding in which this way of thinking flourished.

The success of the Victorians began, as Himmelfarb sees it, with the strength of their language. We have a lower starting point for moral reflection than they had, and a sign of our lack of conviction is said to be the change in usage from "virtues" to "values." Values (giving the word a moral shading) is a late-found synonym for morals, which limits and debases the meaning of morals, and even Margaret Thatcher is gently chided for saying it once instead of "virtues." It was, we are told, the moderns and especially Nietzsche who transformed virtue into one more good with a price on its head. This is a plausible abridgement of history, but I do not altogether believe it. I suspect that not only the German pragmatist but the Americans Peirce and James, and a good many others in the last decades of the nineteenth century, found themselves unsystematically on the track of an expanded sense of "value." And when it comes to the test, Himmelfarb is one of them: "virtues" are quietly replaced by "values" for most of her book.

Adopting the change in practice, she cannot let it pass in theory. "So long as morality was couched in the language of 'virtue'," she writes, "it had a firm, resolute character." This is to ascribe an extraordinary efficacy to language. Much likelier, virtue lost some of its weight because it became a cant term, whose pliability in the mouths of brutal or shallow persons brought the idea itself into partial disrepute. A fair complaint would be that the same has now happened to value. And yet, as Himmelfarb points out, the word "virtue" is again in active use by philosophers who describe themselves as political liberals; and I have heard a suburban mother say to her adolescent son, "You're going to make me wonder if you have any values at all," with an authority as far beyond defiance as Margaret Thatcher's.

The overrating of usage would be a minor matter, except that a still greater claim is advanced for the ideas that the words represent. Moral ideas are credited here with autonomous power: "Values are a determining factor in their own right. So far from being a 'reflection,' as the Marxist says, of the economic realities, they are themselves, as often as not, the crucial agent in shaping those realities." But there is a range of possible effects between the subordinate status of "reflection" and the independence of a "determining factor in their own right."

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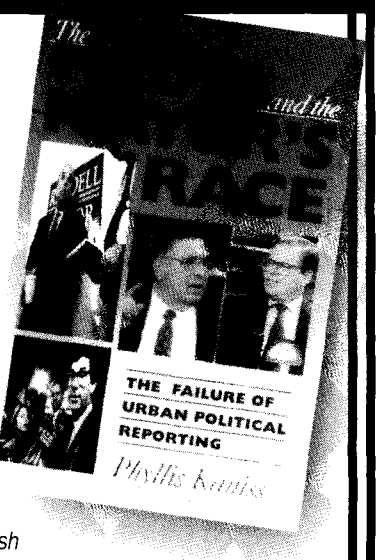

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Granted, ideas of virtue and vice are not a reflection, they are a refraction, a relation, a contingent participant in the course of life we recognize in "economic realities." That is not the same as saying that they have a distinct agency, as if they operated uniquely against the driving force of economics. The improvement of manners can do much (but finite) good where the state of economic morality checks its ameliorative effect; the corruption of manners can do much (but finite) harm when the evil it broadcasts is not allowed to prosper in the marketplace. The morality of the market tells you—with the same truth as manners, because it is a part of manners—what society as a whole is willing to reward.

Himmelfarb says that she is "aware of the difficulties and inequities of Victorian life," above all "class distinctions, social prejudices, abuses of authority, constraints on personal liberty." Nothing in the book inclines me to believe that she regrets the presence of class distinctions; the kind of reform she praises draws its whole authority from the reality of such distinctions. In any case, she adds: "I have also learned to be appreciative of those values that helped mitigate the harsh realities of life, inspiring a 'moral reformation' that, in turn, stimulated a variety of social and humanitarian reforms." The grammar of cause and consequence is revealing. Good values came first: they helped soften the worst of social misery, and in doing so they inspired self-reform in the sufferers. Self-reform, "in turn," brought about social reforms from outside, a new humanitarian interest that the deserving poor, because of their values, could be seen properly to have earned. This progression is not false to the facts. It is less true, or true across a narrower front, than the phrasing may suggest.

Consider a piece of familiar testimony. Bernard Shaw's *Major Barbara*, a Victorian fable in all but its date of publication, has a capitalist hero named Undershaft, a faintly Continental superman touched by the Ruskin-Morris ethic of craft virtue, who recognizes that the poor cannot pick themselves up unassisted. A philanthropist acting from self-interest, he builds a utopian community from whose decencies a few of the poor learn the value of life and learn incidentally how to turn a profit. These poor are handed a decent life before they show any signs of self-respect. Their enterprise is the manufacture of weapons. The externally assisted self-reform thus comes at a cost of misery somewhere else, but that misery is literally valueless: a theorist can tote it up, but it does not affect the society in question. Shaw's politics were socialist and imperialist, and his sympathies were with Undershaft, but he wrote the play because he had hold of a good paradox and his readers were free to turn it upside down if they pleased. The play has a credible source in General William Booth's Salvation Army, and such secular rivals as Toynbee Hall, and the Undershaft sequence of cause and effect reverses the order favored by Himmelfarb. Philanthropic intervention comes first, then self-reform and only at last "moral reformation" for a community that prohibits the suffering it exports.

The lesson of Himmelfarb is fairly close to the lesson of General Booth. *Erst kommt die Moral, dann kommt das Fressen.* Behave now, eat later. This is a gospel preached to the poor, but that fact does not affect its truth: it may be a necessary gospel. Historically, it is important to hold in view the society that made the preaching natural. The Victorian practice of virtue called for sympathies whose limits were drawn from within. Prejudice cut down sympathy, just as charity cut down pain. The conservative heroes of the age, as Himmelfarb reminds us, were paternalist regarding morality and antipaternalist regarding the state. They may be, in both respects, a model to parents and legislators today. But their morality went the whole length, and the state, too, could grow suddenly paternal with a punitive confidence—as it did when it removed the daughter of Annie Besant, the birth-control propagandist, from the custody of her mother on the ground that the child of such a person might inherit her opinions.

When you think about it, the Victorian faith in work as a way of redemption was part of the same ethic, and not to be confused with our American belief in work for results. We care about work instrumentally: it is the means by which an individual shows that he or she amounts to something. The Victorians cared about it as an end in itself, the proof that human life was endowed with inseparable duties. Himmelfarb sees the difference and yet her desire to impute unity as well as stability to Victorian culture sometimes leads to a flattening of observable differences within the period. Carlyle, an evangelist of work, inculcated the worship of heroes as a spiritual exertion by which men could realize an idea of Man and the people come to share in the conquests of a nation. Samuel Smiles, the author of *Self-Help*, wrote more gently for a humbler audience who sought models rather than heroes. When Himmelfarb calls him "Everyman's Carlyle," the unified approach exacts a high toll.

Still, it is true that the Victorians differed with each other less than they differ from us. They believed that society is indivisible. There was a "common good" to which political and moral thought deferred; and the common good required sacrifices by the rich as well as the poor. The poignancy of that belief is audible in a passage Himmelfarb quotes from a lecture addressed to the working classes by Arnold Toynbee:

> We—the middle classes, I mean, not merely the very rich—we have neglected you; instead of justice we have offered you charity, and instead of sympathy, we have offered you hard and unreal advice; but I think we are changing. If you would only believe it and trust us, I think that many of us would spend our lives in your service.

Ruskin in *Unto this Last*—a book that Himmelfarb does not quote, which contains a chapter relating value intimately to virtue—found a similar offense in the style of consolation employed by the rich:

> We continually hear it recommended by sagacious people to complaining neighbours (usually less well placed in the world than themselves) that they should "remain content in the station in which Providence has placed them." There are perhaps some circumstances of life in which Providence has no intention that people *should* be content. Nevertheless, the maxim is on the whole a good one; but it is peculiarly for home use. That your neighbour should, or should not, remain content with *his* position, is not your business.

It is less important, Ruskin thinks, to give the right admonition to our neighbors than to know how many our neighbors are.

On the subject of the common good, more is promised by this book than it ever finds occasion to deliver. Similarly, the topic of public education, so absorbing to the Victorians, is kept to second-rate status, and the criticism of commerce, familiar in Ruskin, Dickens and others, is generally played down. I think the reason is that Himmelfarb is more concerned here with the part of morality that reduces disorder than with the part that makes for an equitable order.

Her dutiful wives and husbands, generous but conditional philanthropists, liberal-minded women against women's rights and well-meaning apostles or recruits of the workhouse, are meant to illustrate good habits and how they are learned. But at this point a large problem of translation arises. To the citizen of a twentieth-century democracy, these "small morals" will seem conspicuously smaller than those involved

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in citizenship. The habits of a docile member of society and the habits of the citizen do both depend on precepts and consensus. But the first are a matter of reflex, the second a matter of reflection.

Not all Victorian moral thinkers were quite so remote from democratic ideas, and those who were least remote may still seem representative Victorians. In a previous book, *Poverty and Compassion*, Himmelfarb wrote at length of the philosopher and educator T.H. Green. In this book he comes into one or two of her lists and is cited for the suspicion in which he held "paternal government." It would have served her popular audience well to quote Green's remark that "we must not allow" the ideal of a rational freedom "to mislead us into supposing that there is any moral freedom, or anything of intrinsic value, in the life of conventional morality." The burden of this remark is that the morality of habits acquires value only when we make it our own by rational approval. Himmelfarb guards too little against the misleading supposition that the Victorians believed conventional morality to be intrinsically admirable.

Across the classes of society, Himmelfarb gathers a long file of witnesses to testify their concurrence in an existing state of morals. We are reminded how forcibly the middle-class idea of respectability was impressed upon the poor, and she remarks that "by 'moralizing' the idea of the gentleman, the Victorians democratized it as well, extending it to the middle classes and even, on occasion, to the working classes." A fine and suggestive chapter explores Beatrice Webb's youthful essay on Jewish adaptation to the market society of England. The virtue of the Jew harmonized, Webb thought, with the motive of economic man, "an Always Enlightened Selfishness, seeking employment or profit with an absolute mobility of body and mind, without pride, without preference, without interest outside the struggle for the existence and welfare of the individual and the family." That quotation is allowed to close a section triumphantly. Yet, from the quotation itself, it sounds as if Webb recognized with some irony the limits on the "interest" of the Victorian Jew, and indeed on the interest of "economic man." If she did not describe religion as an illusion in the manner of Marx or Freud, that may have been as much a matter of prudence as of sentiment.

Others, too, who might be supposed outside the consensus of Victorian morals, are received here with a domesticating touch. Oscar Wilde is brought up to lend some color to the claim for a Victorian "counterculture." *The Picture of*

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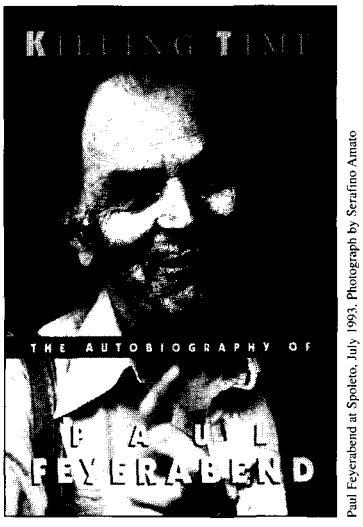

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Dorian Gray is full of aesthetic epigrams that tread the brink of depravity, and cannot be entirely the moral tale that Wilde sometimes said it was. So far Himmelfarb is skeptical, and to sharpen the "countercultural" savor she neglects a conventional element in Wilde's plays, most pronounced in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, which looked on bourgeois morality as a good thing for the bourgeois. (The artist's morality was for the artist alone, to be whispered and not shouted.) But there was another side of Wilde. He made some genial epigrams on religion. "Catholicism is the only religion to die in," he said. And again: "The artistic side of the Church and the fragrance of its teaching would have cured my degeneracies." When Himmelfarb comes to these sentences, her skepticism deserts her and she intimates that Wilde was, just possibly, a believer all along. She does not stop to ask what the archness of the phrase may do to the frankness of the profession.

How far can we sympathize today with the Victorian rebels who turned above all against the moral consensus in sex? They were, Himmelfarb seems to argue, all right in their way and in their time, in sufficiently small numbers. "A century ago the 'advanced' souls were just that, well in advance of the culture, whereas now they pervade the entire culture." We can see the unhappy consequences of the change, she thinks, in the loss of the stigma against premarital sex. In those days the advanced souls could bear the consequences of sexual freedom, and if they could not bear them none but themselves were the worse for it. Now, with the spread of their manners, society itself has suffered a loss of bearings.

Most readers will agree that in this area too much restraint has been surrendered. Yet the objection of the rebels against Victorian "respectability" deserves to be recalled. Friendship, they thought, was one of the great goods in life, the pleasure from sex was another and a distinctly related good, and a man or a woman might come to believe these things so substantial as to render worthless the counterfeit of a forced partnership that brought no joy. Most Victorians submitted in some degree to the counterfeit, since to do so was moral and to refuse meant the end of respectability: here manners and morals did converge. But with the lifting of the stigma—a great loss, to social stability and to modesty—was so very little gained?

"Today," writes Himmelfarb, "the very word 'stigma' has become odious whether applied to dependency, illegitimacy, addiction, or anything else." *Or anything else* is wrong. Physical abuse of a child is an evil that now brings with it a heavier stigma than ever before. And as the same example shows, stigmas do very well for themselves without much assistance from policy. The argument for a revival of the stigma seems to me a case where the theory of manners has carried Himmelfarb from history to metaphysics with no real pause for experience. Thirty-five years ago, a teenage girl known to have had sex with a boy, or about whom there were rumors of sex, was routinely called a whore. The word was said out loud and clear, and the boys said it in the honorable belief that

> Value dwindles without vice,
> Nice is good and good is nice.

Was this ugly word then the expression of a value? Its more conspicuous motive was sexual resentment, as the best of the Victorians knew, and as Blake knew when he wrote: "Prisons are built with stones of law, brothels with bricks of religion."

One often learns most about a novelist's or a historian's temperament from accidents of tone. From this book, I would judge that Himmelfarb is a convinced admirer, almost an a priori admirer, of families. She shows a tenderness toward the family that stays together—no matter how warped its customary life—that she denies to the most high-minded defector from a family. Thus "the common problem," she writes,

> even among the "roughs," was not the absence of a father but the presence of one who was irregularly employed and regularly drunk and abusive, or, somewhat less commonly, a mother who was drunk and slatternly. Among the respectable poor, both parents were normally present and accounted for, carrying out, however adequately or inadequately, their distinct and traditional roles.

It would be unkind to infer from this: "Better a drunk and abusive father than none at all." Yet, unless something of the sort is intended, one cannot guess the meaning of "adequately" in a sentence that deals only with inadequacy, or know what to make of the odd, satisfied phrase "present and accounted for."

A brief account is offered here of the New Poor Law of 1834 and its most detested innovation, the workhouse. As Himmelfarb records, it became a "point of honour" with many of the lower classes to starve rather than endure the conditions of service there: the "workhouse test" was that any person so desperate as to desire the remedy must be qualified to receive it. But the innovation itself, as

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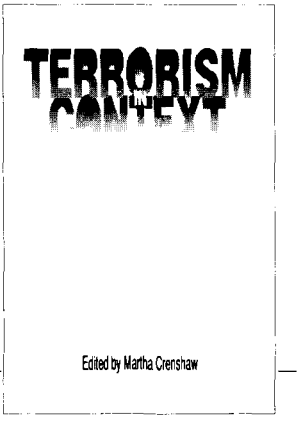

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much as the aversion it prompted in the poor, strikes her as an impressive achievement, and she writes to alter "the Dickensian image" that has swayed our modern judgment against an ingenious piece of social policy. She does not point out that Green, the enemy of paternal government, opposed the Poor Law on the conservative ground that such innovations took away "the occasion for the exercise of parental forethought, filial reverence, and neighbourly kindness." She does quote Disraeli's judgment that the law had "disgraced the country more than any other upon record." These reactions show a depth of resistance so unusual one is surprised to see the notice of it mostly confined to subordinate shorter sentences.

The De-Moralization of Society is history written with sufficient generosity for some of its own evidence to count against its conclusions. Still, it is a delicate matter how a tract for the times gets read. So often, its reception will depend on the partialities of the spirit in which it is read. A hardening of antipathy toward the poor, and toward every effort of social amelioration: these are traits of American life in the 1990s that many sharers of the mood would like to sweeten with the name of virtue. And, less from its explicit argument than from a certain shading of style and the ease of the past-and-present structure, I cannot help wondering whether the effect of this pleasant and informative book will not be to act as a great simplifier.

Himmelfarb's epilogue is certainly calculated for some such effect. Until then, it may have seemed that two books cohabited in a single frame: an anthology of stimulating facts about Victorian society and culture, and an admiring account of the harmony between Victorian manners and morals. Yet traces of a third book were evident in the prologue on virtue and value, and in the nuance of sympathy or scorn with which details were presented throughout. This third book is a charge to policymakers to take heart from the success, a century ago, of a benevolent and punitive ethic of regulation and conservative reform; and its moral is not an implication, it is an inference Himmelfarb herself has drawn in recent contributions to *The New York Times* and *USA Today*. She there declared her belief that "Gingrich's revolution"—the phrase and quotation marks are hers—may offer a moral renewal comparable to the effort of national rededication sponsored by Queen Victoria.

Newt Gingrich's first response is on the record. "I think moral force matters," he told *The New York Times*. "It ain't that hard to understand. Read Himmelfarb's book." It is a fair test of the epilogue to look at its strictures from the perspective of this intended reader, with his readiness for instruction, his eagerness to propose and dispose, his assimilative quickness and his freedom from complication. Will he be chastened by what he finds there, and roused from the noise of slogans to an uncustomary sort of deliberation? Or will he be pleased, with the Victorians and with himself, and on the whole be comforted?

He will recall from an earlier chapter that the New Poor Law, with its innovation of the workhouse, might today appear "grudging and harsh," yet "it was not the simple punitive measure it is so often described as being. A punitive measure would have denied the able-bodied any relief at all." True, "the reformers did not achieve all they had hoped." But the fault lay partly in the realities of the time and partly with "an older, more traditional humanitarianism that resisted their innovations." If that seems a comfort, there is a greater consolation in this reminder: a social expedient like the "workhouse test" and a word like "pauper" sound "individious and inhumane," but they were "the result of a conscious moral decision: an effort to discourage dependency and preserve the respectability of the independent poor, while providing at least minimal sustenance for the indigent."

These historical hints may acquire, in the legislator's mind, a practical value; and there is no avoiding the value of the prudent advice that "today in the inner cities there is a correlation between unemployment and crime, but it is not a causal one. Or if it is causal, it is not unemployment that causes crime so much as a culture that denigrates or discourages employment, making crime seem more normal, natural, and desirable than employment." Employment matters a great deal less than we have thought, and less than the Victorians thought. What matters first and most, in view of the well-established nullity of every social remedy, is the enforcement of morals.

But what is the authority of the final quotation on crime and employment? Suppose that we agree unemployment does not cause crime "so much as a culture" does, shall we not ask with what materials of fantasy or reality the culture succeeds in discouraging so many? Nothing less than "the conditions of life" (as Gissing called them) can be the cause of the despair. And among the conditions must be counted the scarceness, in one section of society, of pictures of dignified employment—pictures that, glimpsed at a distance, do not compete

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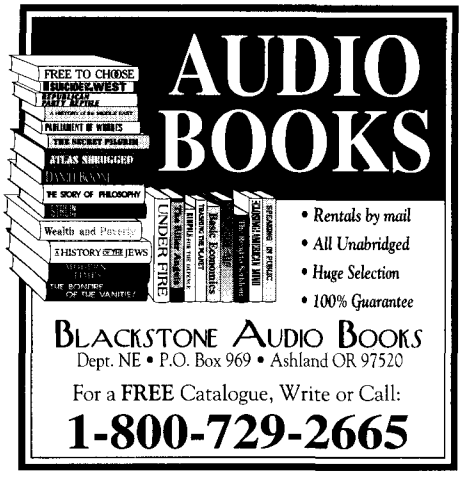

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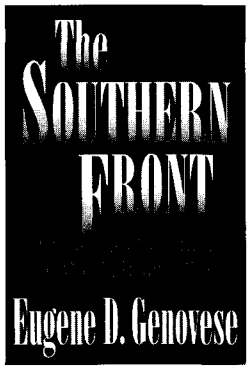

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with the glamour of illegal employment or the unchecked freedom of the streets. To call the scarcity of good and the abundance of evil a "correlation" is rather cool. A culture of crime is one of the conditions of crime; but so is the improbability of dignified employment. The culture should be eradicated as far as possible, but a reform that fights against the culture alone will be a reform of convenience only. This objection will not trouble a reformer whose motive is revenge against the people milling around at the bottom of the social ladder. It will trouble a reformer whose motive is reform.

As for the remedial manners suggested by Himmelfarb's book—the revival of the stigma, of the status of pauper, of the workhouse test—each reader must guess the applicability of these devices to America today. I believe that their pragmatic use may be smaller than the chapters and the anecdotes lead us to think. Some of the reasons can be found in a nineteenth-century study of manners to which Himmelfarb does not allude, Walt Whitman's *Democratic Vistas*. It is true of the Victorian period that American writers, because of the newness and the infectiousness of democracy, recognized early certain hopes that the Victorians, even the most reflective of them, had only begun to claim as part of their future. What Whitman saw best—though there are hints of a similar recognition in Mill and Green—was the irresistible attraction of the idea of *a chance in life*.

The phrase is modest and if it stays modest it will not deceive. The idea that a chance in life belongs to the human inheritance entered the world through democracy, and though the idea may be called self-regarding, selfishness is not its leading consequence. It also breeds humility in the face of the luck or fortune that contributes to shape a life. This was not a humility available to the Victorians: class pride, the confidence of the stigma and other traits of timidity useful to the social order, stood in its way. Yet democratic humility is an achievement of manners, and more than that it is a moral discovery. It is one of those rare changes that serves to differentiate one phase of humanity from another.

The presence of democratic manners is a feature of American life that often strikes hostile observers as innocent. Morally, it proceeds from a habit of mind the reverse of innocent, a friendly regard for the possible fortune, and a skeptical regard for the asserted destiny, of anyone in society. We will never know if there were many "born" drug pushers whom conditions failed to press into reality in certain small towns in South Dakota, just as we will never know if there were many "born" poets among the children of strategic thinkers. Individual lives succeed or fail depending in unquantifiable measure on talent and environment. It may sound loose or reckless to leave it at that, but that is where democratic manners do leave it.

The Victorians had their own useful traits for self-preservation, a mingled irony and fatalism most unfamiliar in America today. They felt a narrower pride than ours—not the same as arrogance—in the face of moral luck. In some moods we naturally envy their pride, but we cannot graft one history onto another. The virtues we build on will have to remain our own. And so the party of conservative improvers, among whom Gertrude Himmelfarb is the pre-eminent historian, needs to think carefully about the innovations it projects for the manners of American society.

The combination for conservative reform in our day is not greatly different in some respects from the combination that held for the Victorians. Then, there was a class of utilitarian economists on top, and, making up the mass for reform, a rank-and-file of Evangelicals and Methodists. The behaviorists in the think tanks, and the Christian Coalition with its millions, are perhaps a comparable blend. To judge by the early evidence, however, the reforms our improvers aim at are more speculative than any attempted by the Victorians. They are trying to bring about the acceptance of a freedom which, for all but those with a great deal of money, will have as its reward self-discipline, self-restraint and the embrace of a humble station in society, with no disturbing consciousness of unfulfilled possibilities.

Some of these ends seem to me desirable. Some of them, in spite of the vividness of Himmelfarb's anecdotes, seem undesirable ever to render routine, as much because of the passions they feed in the governing classes as because of the reaction they produce in the governed. In proportion as the design succeeds, the manners of American society will cease to be those of a democracy. But there are no moral equivalents in manners, and our degree of disorder (the staggering rate of out-of-wedlock births, for example: five times that of England in 1870) may indicate a difference of kind from the Victorians. Quantitative change does at some point turn qualitative, and it is senseless to think of the inner city today as Dickensian. In any case, to the extent that the Victorians are a possible model, they have not yet been used by our innovators. Victorian conservatives believed in punishment, but they also believed in

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remedial help. To offer, as policy, mere penalty, to suppose the removal of assistance alone could supply the motive for self-reform: this was beyond their imagination and beyond their ambition. They never thought to experiment with a wholly punitive paternalism.

"The very principle of authority for good ends as well as bad has been put to scorn by the weakness of men in authority." The sentence was written in 1868 by Frederic Harrison, a Positivist who was also a constitutionalist. He had in mind the 1866 riots in Hyde Park, but he caught a truth about America in 1995. "The governing classes," Harrison added, "never pretended to rely on force. They trusted to maintain their supremacy by their social power, and their skill in working the machine." The Victorians knew society is governed by opinion; by persuasion, which is a different thing from force; by the gradual influence of manners rather than the enforcement of morals; by agreements that are the more binding for being tacit. To govern by opinion did not mean to tease and unsettle and scandalize, or to foment civil fury so long as it was done in a good cause. Nor is this truth of political manners exempt from a consequence for political morals. When a society governed by opinion turns habitually to force, the force required will be such that, whether disorder prevails or is put down, the governing classes must sacrifice in the name of survival every trace of the life they wanted to see survive.

DAVID BROMWICH is the author of *A Choice of Inheritance* (Harvard University Press) and *Politics By Other Means* (Yale University Press).

The Gambler

BY STANISLAW BARANCZAK

Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years, 1865-1871 by Joseph Frank

(Princeton University Press, 523 pp., $35)

I shudder at the thought, but the story of an artist's life told in this book may provide the foes of the National Endowment for the Arts with their most damaging artillery. Here, in the fourth and penultimate part of Joseph Frank's monumental biography of Dostoevsky, is the evidence that geniuses need no subsidy to flourish and the rest of the pack can go to hell anyway. Here is a real-life example of a writer producing masterpieces at the rate of one every two years, rarely knowing where his next meal was coming from, and constantly distracted by a host of other problems. How little the greatness of a work of art can actually have to do with the artist's financial security, or with the circumstances of his or her daily life: this mystery is the highly intriguing subplot of Frank's extraordinary book.

To an even greater extent than in the previous three volumes, Frank succeeds in the difficult art of balancing biographical information and textual interpretation. When he turns to Dostoevsky's books, his chronological presentation comes to a halt and it yields to a meticulous and sophisticated reading. This is the rare sort of "life and work" that manages to avoid the trap of biographical determinism (interpreting works and their specific qualities as if they were the only possible consequences of particular events) while recreating for us the extraliterary setting so that it sheds light on the enigmas of the text. Frank's reading of the novels that Dostoevsky wrote between 1865 and 1871 offers particularly fresh insights into the most puzzling questions concerning the structural qualities of the works, their mutual connection and their relation to their contexts (for instance, to the ideological challenge of Nihilism). And yet, for all the puzzles that Frank solves, this volume is, at bottom, a book about a puzzle that cannot be rationally solved.

Its subtitle, *The Miraculous Years*, says it all. Not even our awareness that the concluding part will treat *The Brothers Karamazov* detracts from the sense that this part, the one covering the years between 1865 and 1871, is the climax of the story. Like a good mystery play, Frank's biography has been building suspense for its first three acts, so as to erupt with sensational developments in

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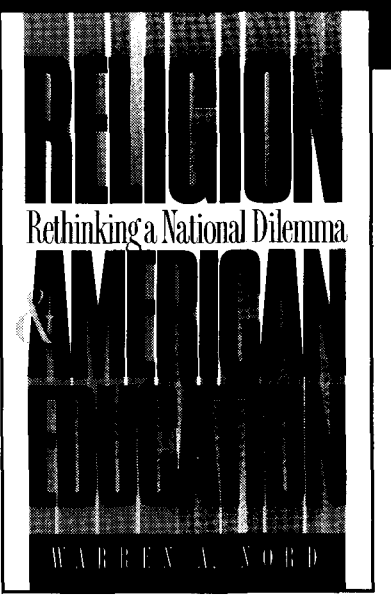

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its fourth. *The Seeds of Revolt, 1821-1849, The Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859* and *The Stir of Liberation, 1860-1865* have now brought us to the half-decade that forms the most notorious period, and also the most baffling period, in Dostoevsky's life.

More than baffling, actually. What this book makes us ponder is, I say this without exaggeration, the possibility of miracles. For no other term can describe the confounding fact of Dostoevsky's creation, within just six years, of three of his four greatest books, each an extremely ambitious and innovative literary undertaking, each a masterpiece of the highest order. The mere emergence of *Crime and Punishment, The Idiot* and *The Devils* in such a short period would be miraculous in good times. What makes the feat even more so are the circumstances under which Dostoevsky conceived, planned, wrote (or dictated), revised (or totally rewrote, in the case of the entire first part of *The Devils*) these books and negotiated with publishers (sometimes acting as censors, as with the famous suppressed chapter of *The Devils*, containing the "Stavrogin confession"). It all happened during a period in Dostoevsky's life that was filled with misfortune, except for the one great fortune of his second marriage.

His misery was far from merely financial. Debts and destitution aggravated the combined burden of many other troubles: devastating illness, a pathological attraction to gambling, a nomadic life in Germany, Switzerland and Austria whose climate, people and customs he could not stand, increasingly strained relations with some of his former friends, premonitions about the fate of Russia from which he felt cut off and, as if all that were not enough, personal tragedy, when his beloved first child died in infancy. Compared to such bundles of nerves as Kafka, who was physically unable to write at the slightest sound of his neighbors' steps overhead, or Proust, who could work only in the insulation of his cork-lined study, Dostoevsky, a victim of epilepsy and no paragon of mental stability himself, must be credited with preternatural toughness. He was the thick-skinned elephant among the geniuses of his form.

Neither Kafka nor Proust was ever so destitute as to depend on his writing for his next night in a cheap hotel. Neither of them had to pawn his watch or overcoat while waiting for an advance from a tardy publisher. To be sure, as Frank's detailed analysis of the ebb and flow of cash in the Dostoevsky household shows all too persuasively, their humiliating lack of funds throughout their four-year-long sojourn in Western Europe was due to financial instability for which Dostoevsky had only himself to blame. The sorry state of his finances was caused as much by what was the worst in his nature as by what was the best in it. The best in him was his generosity, his genuine compassion for the misery of others, his deep-rooted sense of responsibility. The worst was his addiction to gambling, an obsessive urge that with sickening regularity made him lose at the roulette table whatever he had just earned at the writing desk.

There was a vicious irony at work. It was the poverty brought upon Dostoevsky by his generosity that forced him and his young wife to depart for Germany in 1867 in the vain hope of shaking off his creditors and his insatiable dependents. Yet it was precisely in the casinos of Western Europe that his poverty was made worse by his gambling losses, so that after a while the Dostoevskys' return to Russia began to seem like another necessary escape. But then those same gambling losses were the reason they could not afford, for an agonizingly long time, to travel back to St. Petersburg.

The primary cause of the writer's financial ruin was his noble yet ill-conceived decision to take upon himself the burden of paying off the debts and supporting the family of his older brother and business partner Mikhail, the cofounder and coeditor of the journals *Time* and *Epoch*, who died suddenly in 1864. This was also the year Dostoevsky's first wife died, which left his stepson Pasha Isaev in his care. This sordidly selfish young man, like Mikhail's equally unscrupulous family, took Dostoevsky's generosity as a matter of course. (A reader cannot help wondering where this writer's fabled keenness of psychological insight was when he needed it most in his own life.)

They began to exploit him mercilessly. They effectively lived off his support, without ever trying to alleviate his burden by looking for some other source of income. They also did their best to scare off Dostoevsky's young fiancée, regarding her immediately as a competitor for the pie that was, in their view, due to them. In this young woman, however, the vampires met their match. If Dostoevsky was tough in work matters but otherwise easy to soften up with tears, genuine or fake, the 20-year-old Anna Snitkina, soon to become the second Mrs. Dostoevsky, was (all of her secretly shed tears notwithstanding) toughness itself.

She was also a charming, intelligent, buoyant, compassionate and thoroughly honest woman whose unique blend of strong will and devotion to "poor Fyedya" helped her more than once to save their marriage and their love without making her quarrelsome or despotic. And she was blessed also with considerable literary ability. The portrait of Dostoevsky and herself in her official *Reminiscences*, and in her more intimate stenographic diary, is clear, rich in detail and unbiased enough to serve as an indispensable source of information about their life together during the "miraculous years" and after.

Frank does justice to this extraordinary woman not just by drawing abundantly from her two books, but also by bringing out the human dimension of the Dostoevskys' marital union. He makes us feel, for example, what it meant and how it felt for the kind-hearted and openminded yet impressionable and inexperienced wife of the 45-year-old famous writer to witness his epilepsy for the first time. The attack was a particularly horrible one, and it occurred in a particularly unsettling situation: their first visit to her sister's after the wedding. Anna instinctively rushed to her husband's help while the other women fled the drawing room hysterically. Frank also emphasizes the almost boundless grace with which Anna handled Dostoevsky's gambling obsession, forgiving him each time he squandered their money.

The epilepsy and the gambling were only the first of her husband's troubles that she had to bear. He was also highly irritable and unpredictable in his reactions; it was entirely possible for him to start a quarrel about nothing (about, say, the size of the guard of the King of Saxony) and to continue it with petty-minded obstinacy until the first of Anna's tears reduced him to begging for forgiveness. His concentration on his work made him not just a hard companion to live with, but also a hard companion to see at all: he worked mostly at night, slept until noon and spent a large part of the afternoon devouring Russian newspapers in a library or a café. And yet, with all his shortcomings and infuriating habits, he was a loving husband and father (after the death of their first baby Anna gave birth to another), a man able, at least in his better moments, to appreciate the tremendous—and for him, rare—stroke of luck that his marriage to Anna had been.

It was a tremendous stroke of luck for Dostoevsky's readers, too. The miracle of his three swift masterpieces would not have come to pass had not a whole

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series of happy coincidences led one day in 1865 to the job interview as a result of which this recent widower, ex-editor of a now bankrupt journal and disastrously overworked author hired secretarial help in the person of Anna Snitkina, then a young graduate from a school of stenography. As the reader of Frank's biography, trying once more to grasp the peculiar logic of Dostoevsky's tortuous life, turns back from the book's ending to its beginning, he cannot help thinking about the relation of great art to pure chance. Imagine our collective consciousness without what we learned about the human soul from *Crime and Punishment* alone, and then reflect that we would not have this novel had one of the links in a chain of trivial and necessary accidents been missing. What if one of the several other women to whom the widowed Dostoevsky proposed had accepted his offer? (He was in such a hurry to find a wife that he even accosted a woman who was still waiting for the death of her severely ill husband.)

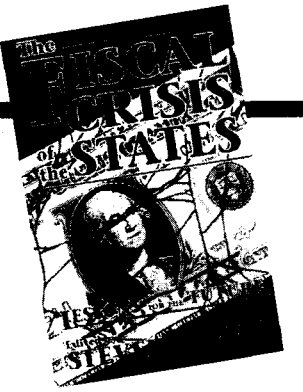
And Dostoevsky needed more than just a stenographer. In fact, before focusing on *Crime and Punishment*, the first of the three masterpieces, he needed all the technical aid and emotional support he could get, since he had to extricate himself from a trap. He was obliged to finish a short novel, later known as *The Gambler*, before the deadline set by the unscrupulous publisher F. T. Stellovsky, or that Shylock of St. Petersburg would gain the right to publish all his works without compensation for the next nine years. Frank's detailed account of Dostoevsky's emotional state at this dramatic moment leaves no doubt that without the combination of youthful energy, professional skill, stimulating admiration and increasingly devoted affection that he found in Anna, he never would have mustered the strength to accomplish the impossible task of writing *The Gambler* in the month that remained before the deadline, and never ... well, one shudders to think of the consequences for *Crime and Punishment*, and for all writing to come.

So Dostoevsky's future was literally in the hands of Anna Snitkina. What if she had accepted and lit the cigarette that Dostoevsky offered her several times during the interview—ostensibly out of absentmindedness but most likely as a ruse, to find out whether she was some kind of a bluestocking young Nihilist? Again, one shudders. This sort of biographical speculation, which ultimately makes the very existence of *Crime and Punishment* the result of an unlit cigarette, has no place in Frank's scholarly work, which is quite properly concerned with what actually happened rather than with what could have happened. Still, Frank reminds us that there were novels, some of them of comparably sweeping scope and potential significance, on which Dostoevsky had been meditating and working but which never left the precincts of his notebooks (unless they were incorporated into his other books). This was the case of his long-planned *Atheism* or *The Life of a Great Sinner*, which was elbowed out by the works that he did succeed in completing.

So maybe the unwritten masterpiece is not such an empty concept after all. Maybe the necessary price to pay for a particular artistic accomplishment is the artist's failure to accomplish something else which, in the final analysis, might have been equally important. Frank quotes Dostoevsky's opinion about himself as an essentially unfulfilled writer: he hoped that finally, after completing *Atheism*, "perhaps people will at last say that I did not spend all my time writing trifles." Coming from the author of *Notes from Underground*, *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot*, such a statement sounds like an unbearable fishing for compliments, until we realize that he meant it. And that no one knew better than himself what he had not managed to accomplish.

To those of us who consider the three great novels of 1865-71 to be the triumph of Dostoevsky the artist—or, perhaps I should say, of the artist in Dostoevsky—his victory is first and most obviously a triumph over the constraints of time. Frank's biography makes fascinating reading if we follow the deadlines, the story of the writer's incessant battle to meet dates of promised delivery, a doubly maddening struggle since he was usually writing the consecutive chapters of his long and extremely complicated novels in the form of installments for immediate publication in periodicals.

Not all of his publishers were out to destroy him and rob him of his earnings. There were those such as N. N. Strakhov, a prominent literary critic but a rather impractical manager of the journal *Dawn*, who infuriated Dostoevsky with his penchant for finding the most time-consuming ways of sending him money. And Frank makes an interesting case for M. N. Katkov, a man long vilified for his ultrareactionary views but, in the light of his correspondence with Dostoevsky, surprisingly generous with regard to money and patient about waiting for the tardy



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manuscripts. Too little time to meet a deadline and too much time waiting for payment: this was Dostoevsky's own plot during the "miraculous years."

His triumph over time parallels his triumph over history. Dostoevsky proved able to predict the increasingly ominous course that history was taking in Russia. *The Devils* is simultaneously a contemporary novel and, at least in the minds of the readers of later generations, a chillingly prophetic warning about utopia. It is a portrayal of modern Nihilism in its ripe phase; Dostoevsky enthusiastically endorsed Maikov's penetrating remark about the novel's protagonists being "Turgenev's heroes in their old age," referring to Bazarov and Kirsanov, the heroes of *Fathers and Sons*, which was the first major literary work to tackle the question of Nihilism. But thanks to Dostoevsky's way of dramatizing Nihilism's ultimate consequences—"Starting from unlimited freedom, I arrive at unlimited despotism"—the novel also envisages one of the directions in which Russia may go, and it does this with unfailing accuracy. It is no wonder that sixty or seventy years after the inception of *The Devils*, this book was furiously attacked by Soviet critics (while, naturally, the censors made it unavailable to readers), as if it was a contemporary report on Stalinist reality.

Courtesy Novosti 21

DOSTOEVSKY IN 1865

Frank does an admirable job of tracking down the intellectual influences and the thematic impulses coming to the writer from the events of his time, with which Dostoevsky kept abreast all the time, owing to his almost narcotic habit of reading several Russian newspapers a day. Of particular interest are Frank's discussions of the writer's horrified and angry reactions to the beginnings of Nihilist terrorism, from the isolated attempts on the tsar's life to the infamous Nechaev affair, which was to provide Dostoevsky with the plot outline for *The Devils*. And Frank's fourth volume brings to mind the influences analyzed in his previous volumes, beginning with Dostoevsky's involvement with the Petrashevsky Circle, his subsequent arrest, the legendary last-minute revocation of his death sentence and the ten years spent in Siberia (the first four years in a penal colony). Dostoevsky represents a rare convergence of personal experience, intellectual analysis and spiritual passion, which allowed him to look into the future, and envisage at least the worst-case scenario. And then, rarer still, he had the artistic gift to put this prophecy into the language of literary images. Whoever has read the description of Kirillov's suicide, to give but one example, knows what I mean.

But Frank's account of the "miraculous years" also puts together, with an unprecedented richness of detail, the complex picture of perhaps the most bewildering aspect of Dostoevsky's triumph. Page after page, Frank's book confirms the intuition, I suppose, of every reader of Dostoevsky: that his best work represents a triumph over many things, but most importantly a triumph over himself. If we conclude that during Dostoevsky's "miraculous years" almost everything, except Anna at his side, conspired to make the creation of his three masterpieces impossible, then we must also conclude that he himself was a part of the conspiracy, if not its leader.

I have in mind the discrepancy between Dostoevsky the thinker and Dostoevsky the artist. Unlike Gogol, who began propounding his ultraconservative views after writing his great works, Dostoevsky was already a full-fledged monarchist, nationalist, Great Russian imperialist and political conservative years before he climbed the heights. It is true that the times were different. The notorious attack by the critic Belinsky against Gogol seems gentle compared with the brutality and the crudity of the literary, philosophical and political discourse that the authors of the next generation, such as Dobrolyubov or Pisarev, were dishing up; and this change was only one among the many threatening signs of the rapid growth of Nihilism that pushed Dostoevsky more and more toward conservatism. Frank is also quite right in his insisting that Dostoevsky's public approval of the tsar's agrarian reforms shows him still quite far from the extreme right wing.

Still, Dostoevsky's outlook was close enough to this extreme not to be confused with any variety of centrist, Western-modeled liberalism. There is a telling quote in *The Miraculous Years*, from the letter to Maikov that Dostoevsky sent from Geneva, which was swarming with exiled Russian revolutionaries and anarchists:

> The Petersburg police open all my letters, and since the Orthodox priest in Geneva ... works for the secret police, the post office in Geneva (with whom he has secret connections), delays letters addressed to me.... But how can someone like myself, an honest man, a patriot, who has delivered himself into their hands to the point of betraying my previous convictions, idolizing the tsar—how can I bear to

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be suspected of some sort of connections with some sort of Polacks or *The Bell* [the title of the journal published in exile by Alexander Herzen]! Fools, fools! Involuntarily, one pulls back from serving them. How many guilty among us they do not even notice, but a Dostoevsky is suspect!

This outburst of hurt dignity is one of Dostoevsky's lowest lows. Notice the readiness to "serve" and to "idolize" authority, the self-pity of someone whose servility and idolatry are going unrecognized, the ominous hint at the guilt of others whom "they do not even notice," and above all the fact that the writer obviously has nothing against Russia's being a police state as long as "some sort of Polacks" or other rebels are harassed and not he, "an honest man, a patriot." And that is not all. In the same letter (written, remember, by someone who knows that his correspondence may be intercepted by the secret police) Dostoevsky goes even further:

> Ought I not appeal to some *personage* [Dostoevsky's italics] and ask him to free me of the suspicion of betraying the Fatherland and in having relation with the Polacks, and also to not have my correspondence intercepted? It's disgusting! Really, they should know that the Nihilists, the liberals of *The Contemporary* [the leading organ of the radicals] for three years running now have thrown mud at me because I broke with them, hate the Polacks and love my Fatherland. Oh, the scoundrels!

It is hard to accept that this pre-Orwellian declaration of loyalty to the absolute ruler, and this readiness to "hate" whomever a loyal subject is supposed to hate, came from the pen that a few years later would write *The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*. It would be a gross oversimplification, of course, to maintain that a writer whose views are ultra-conservative—or, for that matter, ultra-progressive—cannot by definition be a great writer. And yet we feel instinctively that great literature does not go well with a spirit of hatred, intolerance, narrowmindedness, fanaticism and blind obedience to authority, whatever their political coloring.

Hatred is an issue of special significance here, since it seems to be the personal feature of Dostoevsky that handicapped him the most in his quest for literary greatness. Frank's biography brings out more than enough evidence that Dostoevsky was not just irritable but also hateful. It would be hard to overlook the numerous manifestations of what his biographer calls "rabid xenophobia," which was the reverse side of his ultranationalistic belief that, to quote another of his letters to Maikov, "our [Russian] essence ... is infinitely higher than the European. And in general, all the Russian moral concepts and aims are higher than those of the European world."

Still, if Dostoevsky's hatred of anything German or Swiss (including his loud and absurd conviction that Germany and Switzerland lagged behind the Russian Empire in technological and social achievements) may be looked upon forbearingly, as a peevishness caused by living in a foreign country without a penny to spare and subject to constant petty humiliations, his anti-Polish prejudice deserves special consideration. (It received such a consideration, by the way, as long ago as 1931 in a brilliant essay, "The Poles in Dostoevsky's Novels," by Jerzy Stempowski, a writer who was remarkably free from any nationalistic bias.) Dostoevsky's hatred of the "Polacks" was, if variants of hatred can really be compared, uglier than his hatred of the Swiss or Germans for one simple reason: it was a hatred for the downtrodden.

This prejudice is surprising in a writer whose early oeuvre includes *The Insulted and Injured*, and who had enough Christian compassion and human understanding to create subtle and touching portrayals of prostitutes, down-and-out drunkards and even murderers. He could have saved a drop of his famous Christianity for the Poles, too. (Ironically, he was punished for doing precisely that, even though the charge was not true: his journal *Time* was suspended in 1863 for allegedly expressing sympathy for the Polish insurrection, which was evidently just the figment of a censor's imagination.) After all, the Poles were crushed as a nation twice in Dostoevsky's living memory, in 1831 and 1863, when their uprisings against Russian oppression were drowned in blood by the Russian troops.

And yet, in the eyes of Dostoevsky, the "Polacks" were nothing more than mutineers and troublemakers, insolent enough to demand freedom for themselves, as if they would not have been better off under the protection of the tsar. Owing to their Roman Catholicism and their pro-Western leanings, they were construed by him as pretentious, insincere, presumptuous, haughty and prone to any sort of treachery or fraud. These stereotypes were not just a matter of Dostoevsky's private, extraliterary bias. They also infected his work. With the single exception of the more or less sympathetically treated figures of Polish exiles in Siberia in his *Notes from the House of the Dead*, every Polish character in his later writing is a cliché, a buffoon and a liar and a pathetic failure, if not

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The thread of anti-Polish bias that runs through Dostoevsky's works is harmful to their artistic integrity not because it is anti-Polish in particular, but because it is based on the logic of stereotypical generalization—the sort of logic totally alien to the thinking that otherwise governs his art. The logic of generalization is the reverse side of contempt for the individual. In other words, it is itself the foothold for Nihilism, the same Nihilism that Dostoevsky feared and detested so sincerely. What it brings forth in us is the specter of Stavrogin rather than Prince Myshkin. Even though Dostoevsky understood the nature of this threat better than anyone in his epoch, he had his own kind of Stavrogin in him. And this was the greatest Dostoevskyan miracle. He never managed to rid himself of this drop of poison in his soul, but somehow he managed to put it to timeless use in his warning for humanity. This is the ultimate proof of the power of his art, or of art's power over him.

STANISLAW BARANCZAK and Clare Cavanagh's translation of *View with a Grain of Sand: Selected Poems* by Wislawa Szymborska has just been published by Harcourt & Brace.

Beauties Beyond Borders

BY JAMES CUNO

The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Europe's Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War by Lynn H. Nicholas

(Knopf, 498 pp., $27.50)

The story that Lynn Nicholas tells in her thoroughly researched and nicely written book is the story of the confiscation, transfer, discovery, salvage and conservation of works of art during the Second World War. It is replete with heroic acts and sacrifices, evil intentions and extraordinary misery, as well as knotty ethical issues that for two reasons are still with us today. First, the unearthing of displaced art treasures is far from a finished story. And second, we have yet to come up with a workable way of settling the often convoluted question of their rightful home; that is to whom the works of art legally or ethically belong.

Take, for example, the recent news from Moscow that most of the so-called Priam's Treasure, which was excavated on the site of ancient Troy between 1873 and 1890 by the German amateur archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann and looted by the Red Army from Nazi Germany, is still in Russia at the Pushkin Museum and is scheduled to go on public view, for the first time since the war, in early 1996. Not until August, 1993, did the Russian government admit to having the Schliemann Treasure, even though ever since the war it had been kept under the watchful eye of a special curator. In fact, as early as 1961 the director of the museum, Irina Antonova, had inquired of the Communist Party's Culture Ministry about the possibility of revealing the Treasure. Yet it was only in 1991 that the Soviet Ministry of Culture acknowledged any secret depositories of stolen art.

The public admission of the Treasure's existence raises questions about the 30,000 to 100,000 other stolen works of art that the German Embassy in Moscow estimates are still in Russian hands. Whose property are they? The Germans say they are stolen and should be returned. The Russians say the Germans stole thousands of artifacts during the occupation of the Soviet Union, many of which have since been dispersed into private and public collections in Europe and the United States and are impossible to trace. When asked directly, Vladimir Tolstikov, director of the Pushkin's department of art and archaeology of the ancient world, stated frankly that "many journalists call it theft but it's reparation for damage inflicted on our country in World War II."

And how can one argue with that, given the loss of millions of Russian lives during the long war and the incalculable, flagrant and wanton destruction of the Russian royal palaces during the retreat of the Germans from Leningrad (now St. Petersburg)? Who has the moral high ground here? Those who suffered during the war, won and claimed some property in return? Or those who inflicted suffering on others, were defeated and lost property in the bargain? Who has the right to that property now, fifty years after the war? Whose property is it anyway?

Remember that the Treasure was excavated by the German Schliemann more than a century ago, and that it was he who gave it to Germany. (It was later stored in the Ethnological Museum in Berlin, and during the war it was stored in bunkers in the Berlin Zoo, where it was found by the Red Army.) Schliemann was not a professional archaeologist but a merchant who, ironically, became a judge in the St. Petersburg Trade Court and was made an honorary citizen of Russia. Indeed, his archaeological methods have been criticized as crude by comparison to modern techniques. He seems even to have dug right through the Homeric layer of evidence he was looking for without noticing. Still, he is credited with creating a method where none had existed before: he preserved everything he found, carefully recorded the levels at which all finds were made, had drawings or photographs made of every important discovery and published his results quickly.

Schliemann also realized the importance of quotidian objects in providing an accurate archaeological picture of the past. Mikhail Treister, curator of the department in which the Treasure is stored, is especially excited by its stone ax made of lapis lazuli, lenses of rock crystal that had been polished well enough to have served as magnifying glasses and amber beads that suggest the extent of international relations in the third millennium B.C. from Afghanistan to the Baltic, as well as the strategic importance of Troy along the trade routes between Asia and Europe.

And this is the second point raised, however indirectly, by Nicholas's book: if Schliemann had been excavating under today's standards, the Treasure would have had to remain in Turkey. It would never have gotten to Germany in the first place. Therefore, as the Germans and the Russians go about negotiating a resolution to a situation in which both sides feel wronged because of events of fifty years ago, shouldn't the Turks be brought into the discussion, since they could have a claim on the objects taken to Germany by Schliemann fifty years before that? This is a point Turkish officials made quite dramatically in a recent

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Do Intelligent People Worry About Hell?

Mark Twain said he didn't believe in Hell but was afraid he'd go there. Isn't that a problem with atheism and all those godless "isms" — Freudianism, hedonism, Marxism, etc. — that have fascinated apparently intelligent people? You just can't be sure there isn't a God, a Judgment, a Devil, and a Hell.

But isn't all that Heaven-and-Hell stuff a crutch for wimps and neurotics, an insult to one's intelligence?

Actually, there's a revival of interest in religion going on among the intelligentsia. And why not? Intellectuals have bought into every panacea and quack remedy to come down the pike, and are running out of substitutes for the Real Thing. Ostensibly bright people have pooh-poohed Hell, liberated themselves from morality, turned themselves into pooh-bahs, and created a Hell on earth for everyone else. Perhaps it's true that the Devil's cleverest wile is to convince us he doesn't exist.

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conference on "The Spoils of War" held in New York.

In the morality of determining "ownership" of archaeological materials who has priority? The "country of possession" (i.e., Germany in this instance because they were excavated by a German and were given immediately to the German museum) or the "country of origin" (i.e., Turkey, although modern-day Turkey would have a tough claim to make if it were to say that it and ancient Troy are in any way one and the same)? If the "country of possession," wouldn't Russia have just as much a claim to the Schliemann Treasure as Germany, since it now possesses it and promises to exhibit it in 1996 with a new catalog taking advantage of contemporary testing methods (since status of "possession" brings with it an obligation to scholarship)?

The contemporary politics of "ownership" of such objects are not just a result of the end of the cold war and the collapse of the Soviet Union. They are also a consequence of a post-colonial ideology at play in certain academic, museological and cultural-political circles, according to which a policy privileging the "country of origin" over the "country of possession" is a justified corrective to historical circumstances. As Irene Winter has written, "the successful negotiations resulting in Denmark's return of a group of medieval manuscripts to Iceland opened the door to former colonies worldwide to petition for redress against historical imbalances of power that permitted the removal of valued movable goods." Indeed, as she has also pointed out, the Greek delegation to the ICOM (International Committee on Museums) Working Group on the Return of Cultural Property in 1983 included in its statement that "all countries have the right to recover the most significant part of their respective cultural heritage lost during periods of colonial or foreign occupation."

Like the specific negotiations between Germany and Russia over the Schliemann Treasure, the current, more general debates around the draft UNIDROIT Convention on the International Protection of Cultural Property are about correcting "historical imbalances of power." (UNIDROIT is the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law at Rome, an international organization of which the United States is a member state.) This was precisely the issue fifty years ago at the close of World War II, when the defeat of Germany offered an opportunity for correcting the existing imbalance of power and, it could be argued, instituting a different imbalance. Unfortunately, Nicholas does not emphasize this part of her story. Rather, she is concerned first with the confiscation by the Nazis of works of art in private and public collections within Germany and in conquered territories either because they are desired for Hitler's Reichsmuseum or because they or their owners were undesirable ("degenerate" as art or people). And second, she is interested in the extraordinary lengths to which individuals go to keep their collections or, if dealers, their commercial stock.

In each case there were slippery moral issues to be considered. In the first, there was the notorious Galerie Fischer auction in Lucerne in 1939, in which "degenerate" works of art confiscated by the Nazis from German public collections were offered up for sale to benefit the Third Reich. Was participating in the auction an act of complicity or a way of protecting works of art that would almost certainly have been destroyed? Some collectors, like Joseph Pulitzer and Maurice Wertheim, chose to participate because, as Pulitzer later said, to buy was "to safeguard this art for posterity." And for that reason Matisse's great painting of 1908, *Bather with a Turtle,* van Gogh's moving *Self-Portrait* of 1888 dedicated to Paul Gauguin and other works have survived and are in public collections for the enjoyment of students, scholars and the interested public.

In the second case, there are the stories of the dealer Martin Fabiani and the collector David David-Weill, parts of whose stock and collection survived only because of complicated financial dealings through profit-sharing arrangements and the registration of the David-Weill collection to a British holding company. Both collections were to be exported to be sold in the United States (the latter by Wildenstein), but because both had ties to French companies and France was occupied by the Germans, they were considered enemy assets and were "frozen" and put into storage until the end of the war. They survived, in short, because of their owners' connections to companies doing business in occupied France and within an enemy economy. Still, they survived and the world is richer for it.

Regrettably, Nicholas does not draw out the full extent of the moral implications of the stories she tells; they are

The Robe-Maker

(Yi Dynasty court robe, Victoria and Albert Museum)

You begin. In your arms, simmering bolts
of silk, rain-of-silver brocade, velvet.
There is no pattern: your needle pierces

the cloth half-blindly, its eye streaming
with thread. You must listen, then.
Hear the voice of the fabric as it thickens

under your hands. Wind rustles through
its folds, rising through the cloth's throat
as from the breathless sea of the unborn.

The loom swells. Your shuttle sings.
First, a field of foaming gold. At once
the soil quickens: light surges

in silken waves across the cloth, erupting
into vines, wild rose, dew-soaked grass.
Lime trees spread their voluptuous arms,

spilling white flowers, gossamers, balm—
Naked, each leaf enters its garden of flesh.
And from the frame's edge, green tigers burst

ecstatically onto velvet grass, cleaving
to the sweet change. They have hungered
for this. Now they jump higher, freely

playing in the lime trees, dancing
in their green joy. They do not desire
more. Why should it surprise you, who dream

of flesh like theirs—skin that will never bleed
or gall, fabric that cannot be torn away
from the original nakedness you will return to,

stripped, and shivering, wound in a final
shroud of longing: *more life. More life.*
The leap from light to flesh is miraculous.
Here, your hand has long since moved away.

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so rich in fascinating detail themselves that they demand her full attention. And one can imagine that they would: it is a wonder that so many works of art survived at all, given the desperate to-ing and fro-ing they were subjected to over the course of the war years. The chilling tale of the Ghent Altarpiece, for example, being packed off to Munich and then to Neuschwanstein only to end up with some 22,000 other works of art deep within the tunnels of the salt mine at Alt Aussee, where it was found, cataloged and returned to Ghent hardly the worse for wear, is almost unimaginable and deserves being told for its own sake.

Once the heroic stories of survival are told, however, there remain the more tangled questions of ultimate ownership. They, too, involve moral quandaries, and deserve attention precisely because they are relevant now, at the end of the cold war, when opportunities are at hand to resolve unfinished business in the return of confiscated objects. The controversy surrounding the Schliemann Treasure for example, recalls the debate among U.S. officials between 1945 and 1949 regarding the return of discovered works of art and the issue of war reparations; the terms of that debate also bear directly on current discussions around the draft UNIDROIT Convention. Though Nicholas does not devote as much space to it, her account reveals that the issue of restitution and "ownership" is bound to be even more morally convoluted than the issues of confiscation and compromise that set artworks adrift in the first place.

The question asked in 1945 is still with us. Are works of art an international heritage or a national patrimony? In the case of the Ghent Altarpiece, the competing claims, by rather amazing luck, never came to a head. But if they had, it's easy to see how difficult they would have been to adjudicate. If "international heritage" takes priority, does it really matter (and here I'm thinking in terms of a better understanding of the work of art) whether the Ghent Altarpiece is in Ghent or Munich; or in Paris where Napoleon had it paraded through the streets in celebration of his military conquests; or in Berlin, where two of its panels once were, having been bought legitimately before the First World War only to have had them taken from Germany after the Treaty of Versailles? After all, if the goal of owning such a work is to make it publicly accessible and to assist students, scholars and the general public in their efforts to learn more about it and to better appreciate its beauty and significance, does it matter where it is and to whom it belongs?

It would matter, I suppose, only if ownership were determined by context, that is, by the work's original site, building or completed sculpture—and such contexts were absolutely crucial to its meaning and effect. But in those circumstances only the work's original physical context can be preserved; the political, social and imaginative contexts will remain elusive, resisting any effort to restore the work of art to its original setting in any real sense of the word. In the 1420s and 1430s, when the Ghent Altarpiece was commissioned and painted, there was no Belgium and Ghent was part of Burgundy. By the end of the century, through the marriage of Phillip the Good's granddaughter to Maximilian I, Burgundy and Ghent within it became part of the Hapsburg monarchy. Determining "national patrimony" inevitably means determining not only artistic origins but political origins as well. And what does one do when such origins precede the modern nation-state?

It is perhaps understandable that Nicholas shies from pursuing the ethical and political implications of the past debates into contemporary debates over the "ownership" of antiquities, because those implications are so tangled. To follow the long drawn-out controversy between 1945 and 1949, when various American agencies were arguing over the fate of the paintings confiscated by the Nazis and stored in the salt mine at Alt Aussee, is to appreciate how much political and pragmatic calculation and argument, rather than principled agreement, are the essence of the story.

Ultimately, the agencies, after consultations with museum experts, elected to transfer some of the pictures to the United States, to exhibit and to tour them, and then, responding to a great deal of pressure, to return them to Germany but not to the museum from which they came. They chose instead to install them in a museum in the American sector of Berlin in order to ensure their safety and accessibility. To have returned them to the museums from which they had been taken by the Germans would have, in the minds of some of those involved, been the same as turning them over to the Russians who were the Allies' new enemy.

In retrospect, given the case of the Schliemann Treasure, this resolution looks like a judicious course to have followed, a measured balancing of conflicting interests. The safety of the paintings was assured beyond doubt during a

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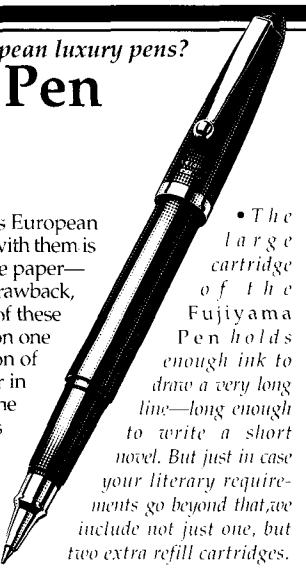

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Whose city—whose "holy city" is it?

It's twenty-eight years, since Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, that the city of Jerusalem has been reunited under Israeli rule. It was understood that Jerusalem was Israel's undivided capital. But now, in the context of the peace negotiations with the Palestinians—unwittingly buoyed by the accomodating attitude of the current Israeli government—the status of Jerusalem has once more become the object of discussion.

What are the facts?

A city of many nationalities. Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, during which the Israeli Defense Forces reconquered Jerusalem from the Jordanians, claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city were rarely, if ever asserted. Jerusalem had always been a city in which many religions and nationalities lived side by side. It was only after the old city was back in Jewish hands that the Moslem Arabs declared their willingness to wage "jihad" (holy war) to bring the city back into Arab possession.

The notion to call Jerusalem an Islamic holy city has only come about in modern times, especially after the Arabs lost the city in the Six-Day War. It now has gained currency by dint of constant repetition. The basis for the claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Temple Mount (sacred to both Jews and Moslems) with its two mosques. It is the place from which Mohammed is believed to have ascended to heaven. Mohammed never set foot in Jerusalem. But aware that it was the holy city of Jews and Christians, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. But never in Moslem history did this mosque compare in significance to those in the Moslem holy cities of Mecca and Medina—cities that no "infidel" may visit.

"Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years."

A tenuous Moslem claim. It's on the basis of this religious tradition that the Moslems designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their holy site. All Israeli governments, in their constant spirit of accommodation to Moslem sensibilities, have largely acceded to this tradition and have put the area in and around the two mosques entirely under Moslem control. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, Moslem tradition had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and if the Moslem Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Moslem claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished and would certainly resist such claim. But Moslem Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. They have construed a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city" and the capital of their proposed state. And it would be an insult to all Moslems to leave the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews".

Jerusalem: never an Arab capital. But the city of Jerusalem—in contrast to Baghdad, Cairo, and Damascus—has never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Moslem Arabs. It was never a political center, never a national or even a provincial or sub-provincial capital of any country since biblical times. It was the site of one Moslem holy place, but otherwise a backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Moslem Arabs until most recent history.

Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there since the Biblical era and have been the majority population since the 19th century. Jews have holy sites in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! It would be preposterous. And the Moslem Arab claim to Jerusalem, based on the mosques on the Temple Mount, is just as untenable. Jerusalem has been the center of Jewish life, of Jewish yearning, and of Jewish thinking for over 3000 years. That is the reason that the State of Israel has rededicated the Jewish holy city to be its indivisible capital.

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still unsettled time. The claims of "international heritage" were realized: viewers were given a chance to view the paintings at the National Gallery, and they came in droves. Within the first two weeks, the paintings were on display in this country, more than 250,000 people saw the exhibition. On April 5 alone, 62,983 people passed through the galleries. Fifty-two of the most fragile pictures were then returned to Germany and the rest, under military guard at all times and escorted by German curators, traveled to New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit, Chicago, Cleveland, Minneapolis, San Francisco, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Pittsburgh and Toledo. By April 22, 1949, more than 10 million people had seen the exhibition and hundreds of thousands of dollars had been raised for German children. On May 4, the remaining pictures were shipped to Wiesbaden. The United States surrendered its claim to "country of possession" status and elected to turn the pictures over to the "country of origin"—only it was a "country of origin" especially interpreted to mean that part of it that remained administratively in the West and under its influence.

In fact, the debates throughout had been impassioned and public (at one point the officers in the U.S. Army's Monuments, Fine Art and Archives section nearly threatened mutiny when ordered to remove the art from Germany). Yet with the eventual return of the paintings, the United States had demonstrated (as many feared that it might not) that "we are sufficiently civilized not to engage in looting ourselves." The competing claims of patrimony versus possession, "free trade" in works of art versus national protectionism, the politics of reparation negotiations versus moral and aesthetic considerations all had been fiercely disputed. Yet finally an unsystematic series of compromises had led to a resolution with which few found fault and with which few would argue today.

What kind of legacy does the experience leave for today? At best, it should serve as a warning against any great confidence in, or hope for, seamless, systematic rules. And the more recent history of efforts to adjudicate such issues only confirms skepticism about comprehensive solutions. For the past twenty-five years, under the auspices of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property, "art exporting" and "art importing" countries (typically the former are so-called Second and Third World countries, while the latter are

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so-called First World countries) have been engaged in discussions about the control of the world's licit and illicit trade in cultural properties. The Convention was adopted in 1970 and ratified in 1972. It is currently under review and may be superseded by a UNIDROIT Convention on the International Protection of Cultural Property, which is still in draft form.

The motives and the provisions of these Conventions are very difficult to sort out and understand. To simplify, the UNIDROIT Convention, should it go into effect and become law, would seriously inhibit the trafficking in works of art, and especially older works for which there is not a clear and unbroken trail of ownership. It would permit direct suits by foreign countries based on alleged violations of foreign export laws. Arguably, this would to some extent shift the burden of stopping illegal exports from the country of origin to American courts.

Balancing the needs and the ambitions of "art exporting" countries (often the same as country of origin) and "art importing" countries—needs and ambitions that may be voiced as cultural, but are in fact political, military or economic—is the crux of the matter. Under the UNIDROIT Convention, the old argument of "international heritage" versus "national patrimony" would be moot, since authority would be shifted to the latter, who "should obtain general rights to the return of cultural objects principally associated with their national culture." Not surprisingly, the resulting negotiations between the "haves" and the "have nots" end up being driven by various financial, military or diplomatic trade-offs. They are, that is, about the exercise of power rather than the pursuit of knowledge. (It has been suggested by many, for example, that the bilateral treaties negotiated by the U.S. Department of State in 1985 with Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia and a few other countries of South and Central America allowing for easier repatriation of certain kinds of objects were in exchange for a crackdown on the exportation to the United States of drugs from those countries.)

In the academic world, there is a parallel division in the ranks and here, too, politics comes into play, though on a different scale. In the case of cultural and academic politics, the negotiations are between archaeologists and art historians; and the issue is what kind of meaning or knowledge of a work of art is thought most significant or even legitimate. To simplify matters, archaeologists give priority to the original historical and physical contexts of a work of art over all other contexts; and more generally over those of a philosophical nature and those pertaining to issues internal to works of art (i.e., their formal properties, the history of style and connoisseurship). Art historians, on the other hand, may or may not be concerned with the original historical and physical circumstances of works of art. Indeed, they may be concerned with intellectual issues that require the displacement of works of art and a consideration of their qualities independent of their original circumstances.

But who is to decide who is right and who is wrong? Why, we might ask, should matters of "original context" take precedence over all others in the study of the history of art? And when matters of national politics and international intellectual access collide, why should the former be privileged over the latter? What is the purpose in determining the rightful venue for a work of art? To correct "historical imbalances of power" or encourage scholarship and the discovery of new knowledge? Sometimes, unfortunately, one has to decide. And there's the rub. The only goal in dealing with confiscated or looted, or otherwise relocated, works of art should not be to return them to their "nation of origin" (if that can even be determined). It should also be to ensure their safety, conservation and accessibility.

In 1942, in response to rumors that "seizures of works of art by enemy individuals are increasing in number," W.G. Constable pondered similar questions and concluded:

> the matter of restitution should be viewed, not in isolation, but as part of a wider scheme of the redistribution of works of art, in the interests of society as a whole. Throughout public galleries are scattered parts of a large number of masterpieces; and it would be a great service, not only to scholars, but to the public as a whole, to have them reconstituted.... This question of reconstitution of dismantled works of art is quite distinct from one with which it is often confused; the return of a work to the body or building from which it originally came. Such a redistribution would be quite impracticable and from the point of view of the world as a whole, disastrous.

The problems of fifty years ago are the problems of today. Unfortunately, then as now, the proposed solutions are not only unclear, they are also far from fair.

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may give some back to you. In truth, everyone in Congress believes the government has the right to take part of your income; and the Democrat-Republican difference over how much it should take is less than 5 percent. Gingrich's image of the feds literally stealing your money strikes a strong chord out in militialand, and fits nicely with his image of an elite-bureaucratic cabal. Of Democrats who oppose the $500-per-child tax credit he says, "The elite believes that if we took the money away from the parents, then we could hire a bureaucrat who would spend the money more wisely."

Liberals lie, too, of course. The Republicans aren't *ending* the school lunch program, as Dick Gephardt implies. Liberals also, as this example suggests, have been known to incite class resentment. This is unfortunate (though arguably harder to avoid when you favor income redistribution). But I don't recall hearing Dick Gephardt call rich people "the enemy." And when Gephardt did commit a comparable sin—fomenting xenophobia by accusing Japan of "economic aggression"—he got his wrists slapped and cleaned up his act. Gingrich's act is still dirty after two decades of wrist slappings.

(3) *Does the nature of your particular audience make it plausible that your words will incite dangerous people?* This question sharply distinguishes Democratic leaders from Gingrich. There's no pro-school-lunch militia out there, and all that's left of the Black Panthers is Bobby Seale's barbecue book. But there is an armed and organized right-wing fringe, way larger than any armed leftist network during the '60s. And the fringe is clearly tuned in to the Gingrich revolution, notwithstanding Rush Limbaugh's claim of "absolutely no connection" between mainstream conservatism and Timothy McVeigh. McVeigh and his buddies are anti-tax, anti-regulation, anti-gun-control, anti-U.N. If the Contract-with-America focus groups had come from the militia milieu that spawned McVeigh, the contract would look in many ways as it now looks, if with rather more oomph.

Could Gingrich claim he didn't *know* about the lunatic fringe? Two months ago his pal Limbaugh announced, "The second violent American revolution is just about, I got my fingers about a fourth of an inch apart, is just about that far away. Because these people are sick and tired of a bunch of bureaucrats in Washington driving into town and telling them what they can and can't do." Maybe Gingrich wasn't listening that day. And maybe he somehow missed all the other signs. But now he knows.

ROBERT WRIGHT

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Gog, magog, agog

STUPIDITY IS CUNNING. WHEN IT loses its appeal to reason, it takes its appeal to the people, and frequently it flourishes. Politics is particularly kind to it. For ideas do not come to power because they are truths. Ideas come to power because they are beliefs. And the popularity of a belief has nothing to do with its truth. (Some people think that a proposition is true, said Lichtenberg, simply because they have understood it.) This is edifying to democrats, but it is exasperating to intellectuals. They do not wish to dignify stupidity, but stupidity is a fact. Stupid ideas have consequences. For this reason, in 1991, when it suddenly appeared on the best-seller list, I read Pat Robertson's stupid book *The New World Order.* (For this reason, too, I tried to peddle it to some writers for our pages. I failed. They all said it was too stupid.)

I WAS NOT SHOCKED BY WHAT I read. Robertson always struck me as a standard-issue sectarian, and as a man with a genius for mediocrity. Everything about him—the jolly, empty eyes, the medicated smile, the aging angel cheeks, the indolent drawl—said: I do not need to think. Oh, and neither do you. So I was not shocked, as I say, to discover that Robertson believes that the course of American history has been determined by a conspiracy of Jews, Freemasons and bankers. Is he, therefore, anti-Semitic? Only in his mind, if you see what I mean, and so the danger is small. Robertson protests that he supports Israel, for which Israel is grateful, though it is Robertson's dumb luck, and Israel's, that Gog and Magog are tarrying. Come the end of days and the ADL really will have a point, even if it will be the last point that the ADL will have. Robertson also protests that he did not mean "Jews" when he wrote "bankers," but this sours me, since it puts me in mind of the infamous Toussenel, author of *Les juifs rois de l'époque, histoire de la féodalité financière,* an anti-Semitic classic (more precisely, a socialist anti-Semitic classic) of the nineteenth century, who, anticipating his critics, wrote in the introduction to his book that "I am forewarning the reader that the word [*juif*] is taken here in general in its popular meaning: *juif, banquier, marchand d'espèce.*"

ABOUT ROBERTSON, THE CRITICS are right: *The New World Order* is theology found under a rock. It is useful to have the hallucinations of "the founder and leader of the most powerful grassroots movement in American politics today" (the words are Michael Lind's) exposed. It is also nice to be reminded of the achievement of Freemasonry, which struck a bold and early blow for tolerance in our "Christian" culture. Does Robertson know that in 1953 there was established the United Grand Lodge of the State of Israel? And (this is the really delicious bit) it accepts Christians. And the great Robertson controversy has also exposed the sorry condition of the crank's Jewish defenders. These Jews think that their conservatism fulfills their Judaism, but their conservatism blinds their Judaism. There was a time when many of them would have recoiled naturally from this *Juden und Freimaurer* crap. Anyway, Judaism doesn't need conservatism to fulfill it, just as it doesn't need liberalism to fulfill it.

AND YET SOMETHING IS WRONG about the critics who are right. For a start, the deranged historiosophy of Pat Robertson is not, so far as I know, the faith of the Christian Coalition. The movement contains in its ranks many decent men and women who do not brood on the Illuminati of late-eighteenth-century Bavaria. In some of the attacks on the Christian Coalition I detect a general condescension to popular religion. This is the parochialism of the urbane, the rubes of Manhattan. It should also be brought to the attention of the Jews now citing *The New World Order* to each other at Starbucks that the eschatology that amuses or alarms them is their own. Gog and Magog were Ezekiel's creations, and the rabbis keenly developed them; and there are many Jews who still believe in the doctrine of the final war of the Lord, and in their account the consequences of the war are not prettier. (Maybe that is Robertson's mistake. Maybe, when the captains of the hosts and the captains of the holy descend to earth to destroy, in a battle that will last from three hours to nine hours, the 19,000 myriads of the absolutely wicked among the nations of the world—I am quoting an ancient text, I cannot say more—they will get *him.*) And is the most vexing question about Pat Robertson really the Jewish question? In the America of Robertson's imagination, surely, the fate of women, minorities and homosexuals will be less happy than the fate of Jews.

EVERYTHING IN THE INDICTMENT against *The New World Order* has been proven, but I cannot escape the feeling that the indictment is a liberal dodge. It is true that the right is presiding over a period of intellectual instability in America, but the capital of that instability is not Virginia Beach, it is Washington. The great Robertson controversy took place, remember, during the first 100 days of the 104th Congress. Ideas about the flat tax, the abolition of habeas corpus, the gutting of America's foreign aid programs, the closing of America's borders and other thoughtful improvements in the American way of life were everywhere, and liberals were writing inches and inches about the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion.* They were not wrong, but they were not straining.

THE SINS OF ROBERTSON ARE such easy uplift. They restore the Manicheanism of the political world. They confirm liberals in their sense of rightness, or leftness. For the sense of leftness is precisely what has been rattled in his way by Clinton and in his way by Gingrich. It has been dawning on many liberals that not everything that the Republicans say about welfare reform or affirmative action or big government is wrong. The orthodoxies are languishing. Old Democrats are metamorphosing into New Democrats. But recall us to the presence of a bizarre anti-Semitic media-mad cleric and we are all Old Democrats. If *The New World Order* did not exist, liberals in the time of Clinton would have had to invent it. I understand, of course, that it does exist, that they did not have to invent it, and so the close readers of the hideous texts have performed a service; but even if Pat Robertson thinks that the Warburgs and the Rothschilds dragged the United States into the Gulf war, something has gone awry at AFDC. There is already too much inerrancy in the land. The proper response to Christian fundamentalism is not liberal fundamentalism.

LEON WIESELTIER

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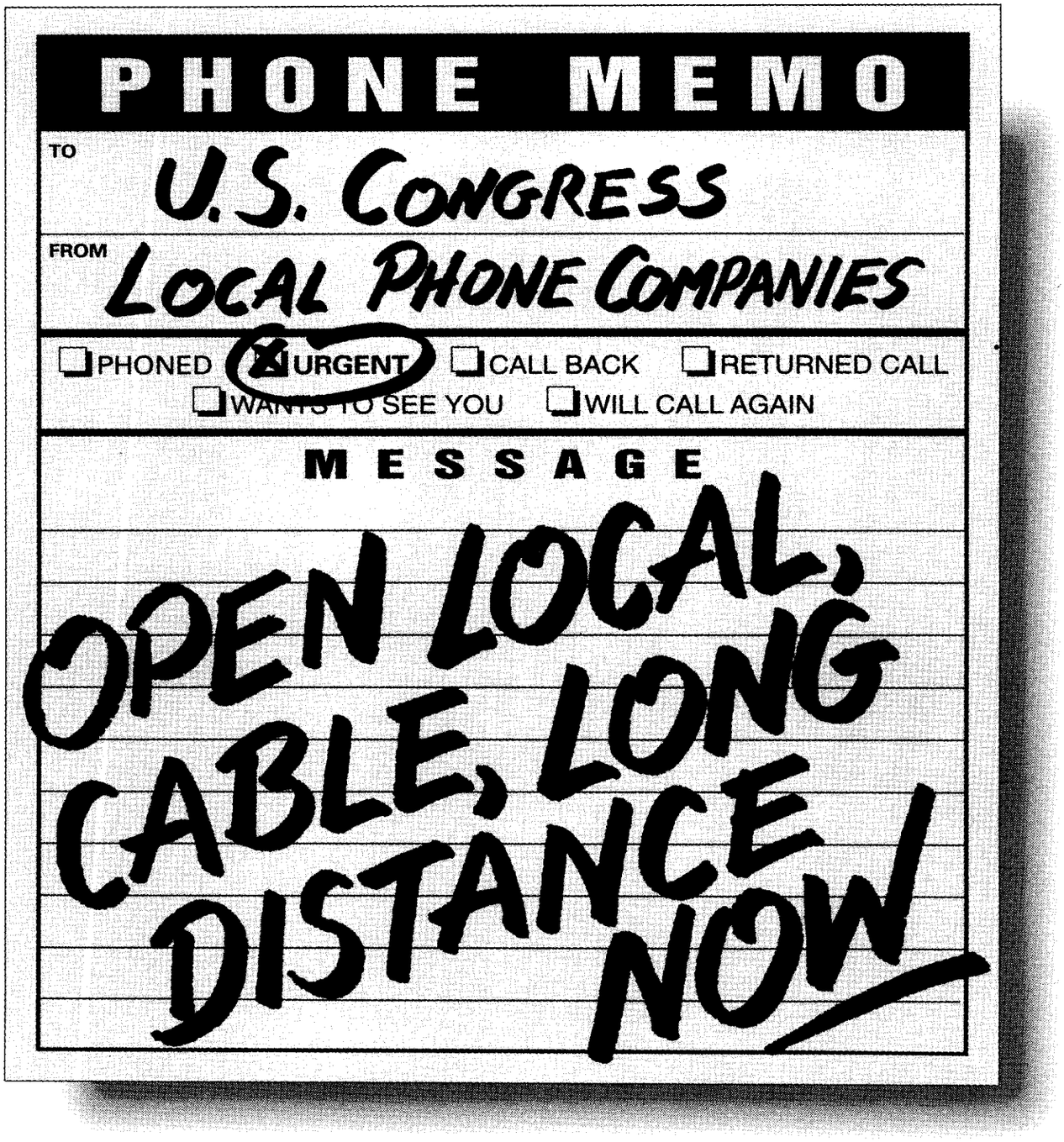

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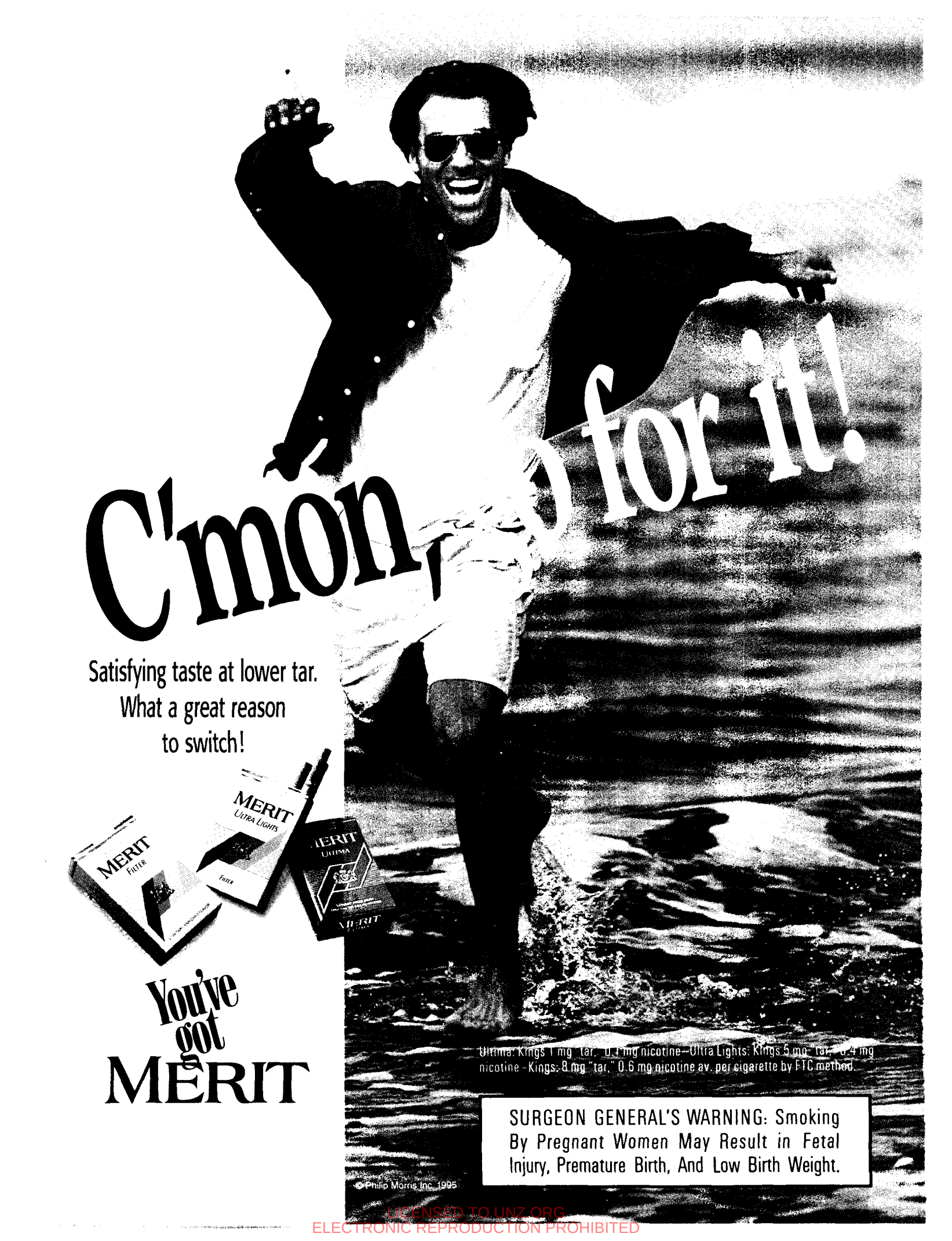
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